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A GREETING.

BY S. W. F.

Merry Christmas! Happy children,
Let your sweetest carols ring,
While you tell again the story
Of our infant Saviour King.
Born and cradled in a manger,
Yet from Judah's radiant sky
Angels sang the midnight chorus,
Glory be to God on high!

Merry Christmas! Youthful workers,
For the blessings of the year,
Pass a greeting smile to others
And a loving word to cheer.
While your hearts and homes are glowing
In the sunshine of delight,
Make the dwellings of the lowly,
By your kindness warm and bright.

Merry Christmas! Aged pilgrims,
Pause a moments on your way,
Listen to the bells proclaiming
Our Redeemer's natal day.
Merry Christmas! Ye who labor,
And are longing now for rest,
Worship Him in whom 'tis promised
Every nation shall be blest.

Merry Christmas! merry Christmas!
Hear the mighty anthem roll,
Like the voice of many waters,
On and on, from pole to pole.
Quiet vale and crowded city,
Humble cot, and stately hall,
Prince and peasant, sing together
Merry Christmas, one and all!

THE KING'S RUBIES

BY THE AUTHOR OF "A TERRIBLE PENALTY," "HIS DEAREST SIN," "MISS FORRISTER'S LAND STEWARD," ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER XIX.

EDSDAILE told Varcoe clearly all the details of Teresa's unaccountable disappearance, and the man listened intently.

He fervently desired to serve his benefactor to the utmost of his power; a feeling of devotion had sprung up in his heart, and it extended to the unknown Teresa, because she belonged to Esdaile and was so dear to him.

The man saw that very plainly; for, although Derek confined himself to facts, his voice softened whenever he mentioned Teresa's name. The crime angered Varcoe; hardened as he was, he would not have done such a thing.

He soon saw what was wanted of him; but he never yet betrayed a comrade. Even when he was captured and tried, he had refused to implicate the men concerned with him—the "Invincibles"—he would not drag in others to share his punishment; so now, when Esdaile had finished, he said quickly—

"If it's my pals, sir, you wouldn't ask me to peach on them more than need be? You'll know what I mean, sir; I'm not siding with them in this kind of dirty work."

"I quite understand. No—I will not ask that of you. But at the same time if they are holding my wife a prisoner, they put themselves beyond the mercy of even their own associates."

"Yes, sir—that's so. But," added Varcoe hesitatingly, "I don't think they'd keep her like that. It'd be too risky. A young lady with friends to look after her—she'd be found in the end."

"You mustn't try to spare me, Varcoe," said Esdaile, turning paler. "Stephen Hall, who has this business in hand, thinks my wife is an accomplice—that she married me for the jewels, or that she had a lover."

"Not your wife, sir. That's what I thought at first; but I didn't know," Varcoe said, with a shake of the head.

"You think she has been murdered?"

"Yes, sir—either then or afterwards," admitted Varcoe reluctantly.

"Well, it might be best," muttered Esdaile. "But that is what you must find out—I'll give you a photograph."

He opened a desk and took from it a cabinet photograph of Teresa taken in boating dress.

Varcoe rose too and stepped to the light, standing to look at the portrait as if the real Teresa was before him.

Her exquisite beauty awoke the chivalry now slumbering so deeply, and Teresa herself need not have shrunk from his admiration. He did not venture to express it to her husband, but laid down the photograph in silence.

"You had better keep it," said Esdaile.

"I shall remember the face, sir—'tisn't like any other I ever saw," replied Varcoe, with subdued enthusiasm; "but, if you think it better—— No, sir—I might lose it; I sha'n't forget. I'd like to ask you some questions, sir, if I may."

His questions were all to the point—about the position of the house, the rooms; where the boat house was; what route the burglars could have taken—whether by land or river, how far Leigh's Hollow was from town; what sort of country—was it wooded so as to give shelter.

Esdaile answered these questions as clearly as they were asked; he had already told Varcoe about the market cart having been bought in a town some distance off—a clue which the police had for the present dropped. Varcoe shook his head at this, but made no comment.

"I think," said Esdaile, "you had better see the place. Nothing has been touched; those rooms are closed."

"Yes, sir—it would be best," Varcoe answered very quietly.

Esdaile understood. The man would not have gone of his own accord, Alice Winn being in the neighborhood, and he could not assume a willingness he did not feel.

"I mustn't be seen with you," Esdaile added.

"When shall I go, sir?"

"To-morrow; begin at once!" said Esdaile restlessly. "I'll go down early. You can follow, and come up straight to the house. I'll give you the money before we part to-night. And, Varcoe, you must keep me supplied with every item of news, whether it is good or bad, of failure or success. I am rarely out, and if I happen to be, Harris always knows where to find me. Remember, too, that I trust him entirely."

"Will he trust me, sir?"

"Yes; I shall tell him you are acting for me. And another thing—hesitate at nothing for want of money. Now is there anything more you want to say? Because, if not, we'll settle money matters at once."

This was the part of the proceedings Varcoe did not like; but he submitted to the arrangement Esdaile proposed—a weekly wage which, to the man who had been penniless, seemed luxury.

To Esdaile it seemed insufficient, but he saw the necessity of curbing his own generous impulses. All that Varcoe suggested was that he should not have the money all at once.

"You keep it, sir," he said, and give it to me as I want it; then you'll know what I do with it. I'd spend it in drink if I had it in a lump."

"Very well," agreed Esdaile, with a smile that rewarded poor Varcoe. "And now where are you living?"

"I'd a room near the 'Chequers,' sir—lots of us there," said Varcoe, who had risen and taken up his hat, "I'll get a better place to-morrow-"

"No—that won't do," said Esdaile. "You can't go back to a place like that—and it's very late. You must sleep here."

"No, sir, I couldn't stay here," Varcoe said.

"You must stay," declared Esdaile. "Don't you understand I hate to send you back? I can't do it. See—there's a sofa here, and I'll bring you a railway rug. Wait here!"

He had left the room before Varcoe could recover himself. The man looked round as if he were dazed, and was standing still in the same place when Esdaile returned, with a thick warm rug.

"These autumn nights are chilly," said Esdaile, throwing the rug upon the sofa. He turned to Varcoe, who seemed thunder struck.

"You're going to leave me down here alone, sir?" he said uneasily. "Don't, sir," he whispered; "I might do something I'd like to kill myself for."

"No," said Esdaile gently; "you'll lie down on that sofa and go to sleep, to be ready for my work in the morning. Now good night!"—holding out his hand. "You won't refuse this time?"

"No—I won't, sir," replied Varcoe, in a low tone. "I had to refuse then."

He put his hand into Esdaile's, who stood holding it closely, showing signs of deep emotion. He seemed afraid to trust himself to speak, and Varcoe dared not move or utter a word.

"Varcoe," said Esdaile at last faltering-ly, "you don't know what you have done for me. To-night it seemed blank, hopeless; now there is just a ray." He paused to steady his voice; but he could only whisper "Good night!" Then he wrung Varcoe's hand and left the room, closing the door behind him.

Varcoe stood speechless, immovable for some minutes; then, as if in a dream, he moved slowly to the sofa and sank down upon it, hiding his face in the cushion.

Up stairs Esdaile was kissing passionately the lovely face that to him, a thousand times more than to Varcoe, was like none other he had ever seen. The ray of hope had intoxicated him.

When Varcoe reached Leigh's Hollow the next day the autumn sun was shining bright and warm.

Esdaile had given him directions how to reach the boat house, where they were to meet; but Varcoe had not to wait, for Esdaile was there first.

Varcoe now looked a changed man; he was clean, decently dressed, and would have had almost a smart appearance but for his pallor.

He was quiet and more self-possessed than he had been on the preceding night, and went about his work in a business-like manner.

From an examination of the boat house they went on to the Manor, and through a side door up to the closed rooms. Esdaile went in first; Varcoe followed.

Nothing had been moved since the night of the robbery. Varcoe examined safe and door and window with the air of an expert.

He hesitated when Esdaile led the way to Teresa's own rooms, lingered on the threshold, and, when he entered, trod softly as if he were on sacred ground.

It was not until they returned to Esdaile's dressing room that he seemed to think he might speak. Then he asked to see the corridor window, but gave no opinion about it until the examination was over and he was having something to eat before returning to town.

"They came in, of course, by the gallery window," he said. "They most likely got the ladder from the boat house—a rope ladder would be risky at that window. The dinghey, I expect, was a blind, and perhaps the brooch too. I noticed the country as I came along—it's first-rate for hiding."

"Hiding what?" asked Esdaile.

"A trap, sir. I can't help thinking there's something in that cart that was bought. You see, sir, if the men came from town, as most likely they did—the job's been done too well for country folk—they must have come in something, and it wouldn't be the train—too easily spotted. But who'd notice a market cart coming into town? The early morning's just the time for them."

"I thought that myself," observed Esdaile. "I meant that clue to be worked again."

"You let it alone a bit now, sir. What puzzles me is their taking off the young lady. I've a sort of feeling there's something behind we haven't got at."

"What do you mean?" asked Esdaile, leaning forward. "You don't share Hall's view, I know."

"No, sir—not a bit—not the least bit. Of course they'd have stunned her or used chloroform—some of us carrries it. Well, why not do one or the other at once, and take what they want and go? When burglars kill a man, 'tisn't so much because he'll know them again as because he'll raise a hue and cry.

"But what could a girl do? By the time she came to they'd be off. But carry her with them, or—or murder her—why, it stands to reason they'd be hunted down no end. It's such a stupid thing to do! A job to get her away, too. I can't make it out."

"What idea have you got, Varcoe?"

"I haven't one, sir—that's the mischief; I'm only fogged. Mrs. Esdaile hadn't any enemies, sir—had she?"

"None, to my knowledge. Her friends were among musical students, like herself. I met her at the house of a lady I knew little of myself, and she afterwards lived with this lady, and went into society with her."

"This lady, sir—she wasn't jealous?" said Varcoe, hesitating.

"Oh, no; she helped me in every way, though for certain reasons of her own! But I think, in her way, she was fond of my wife."

"Is she a friend of yours now, sir?"

"No; I only made use of her—I didn't like her. But she isn't the sort of person to revenge herself—certainly not in this way—and she hasn't the means either. Besides, she would be found out, which would be ruination."

"Well, sir, I can't make it out. I'll get back now, find a lodging where I can change about as I want, and set to work to-night."

"I shall be up by a later train," said Esdaile. "I'll look after one or two things while I'm here. You know the way to the station?"

"I think I missed the shortest, sir. I ought to have struck a plantation—oughtn't I?"

"Yes—it's some minutes shorter."

Esdaile directed him, and Varcoe left the house. He was glad to get away—to be out of the place. He walked fast, and got into the plantation with a sense of relief.

It was perfectly lonely; the only sign of life was the smoke curling up from a gamekeeper's cottage, and even that was some distance off. Varcoe walked on over the soft undergrowth, absorbed in thought, his head bent down.

Thus it happened that a woman who had come out of a side path was close to him before he saw her. The light color of her

dress attracted his attention, and he looked up.

Alice Winn was standing before him.

The man stood motionless, looking at her vacantly with hollow eyes.

"Frank!" she exclaimed, trembling.

Varcoe stepped back, with bent head; he could not speak.

"Frank," the girl said again entreatingly, "won't you speak to me? It's years since we met——"

He did not look at her, but he looked away into the plantation, as if he only longed for escape. Then he made a movement as if to walk away.

"Stay one minute!" pleaded Alice, putting out her hands as if to stop him. "Tell me how you are—what are you doing! You have been silent all these years since we parted; but I haven't forgotten. We may never meet again—Heaven knows! Don't go as if we were strangers!"

"I have nothing to say," he muttered indistinctly.

"Yes, you have—to me. Do you think because I said we must part, that I could forget you, that I ever tried to? Didn't I tell you I never would, that there'd be always one creature in the world to think of you and pray for you, and believe one day you would come back to yourself?"

He raised his eyes stealthily to her face. It was even sweeter than of old, with trembling lips and sorrowful eyes. He saw no harshness there.

"Do you know I've been in prison?" he said in his rough way.

"Yes—I know. I knew when the time was up; I counted the weeks and months."

"You'd better have forgotten I ever existed."

"Frank, you break my heart!"

"I did that long ago, I'm thinking," said Varcoe bitterly. "Go home, and don't be seen talking to me. There's no saying who may know me."

"Frank," pleaded the girl reproachfully, "why do you try and brave it out?"

"It's only truth—isn't it?" retorted Varcoe recklessly. "They don't give you drink in prison, you know—I got it when I came out; and I hadn't money to pay for food, so I made some one else pay for it. You put me out of your mind; I told you I'd nothing to say."

She stood looking at him, with her hands clasped together, feeling as if her heart would break; but long suffering in silence had taught her to bear sorrow without any outward display of feeling.

The man's appearance seemed to prove his words; she did not know that in his rude way he was something of a hero, bent on making her forget him, and holding back the words that would have made her love him more than ever; and he did not know that he was refusing her the one drop of comfort that he could have given.

"Well," she said steadily, "I've only to pray longer, and you'll come back to me one day. It may be only when you're dying, or I am—but you'll be mine and I yours. We can't alter that; we belonged to each other once, and it'll be the same always. I'll never give you up; and I'll never forget you; and you can't forget me. You think of that, Frank—that I'm always waiting; you've only to come."

Alice moved a step away, but Varcoe did not attempt to stop her.

The girl paused, came back, and held out her hands.

"Frank!" she exclaimed, in a low passionate tone; but he only turned silently away.

He heard her footsteps upon the dead leaves, and he waited until the sound died away; then he raised his head and looked after her with tear-dimmed eyes.

His head sank upon his breast. Oh, those years between then and now! If only his bitter tears could blot them out! She was waiting for him to come back. Well, he might go when he was dying—never till then! He saw his old home and the woods where he and she had wandered.

She was a girl then—almost a child; her hand was in his, he had taken the flower from her dress and kissed it, and she was looking up shyly; the sun was shining through the leaves on her brown hair.

Presently Varcoe raised his head and looked about him as if half dazed. The autumn sun had paled, the lane looked dim; the leaves had faded—they were drooping mournfully in the chilly breeze. He must go. He had given his promise, and he would have to keep it; so, with one lingering glance in the direction in which Alice Winn had vanished, he walked slowly away.

CHAPTER XX.

THERE was a light footstep on the garden path and a gentle raising of the latch; but Alice Winn did not hear the newcomer until she felt a hand on her shoulder; and a voice saying—

"What's the matter, Alice?"

She had evidently been crying bitterly; and Esdaile looked anxiously at her tear-stained face. The girl was about to rise, but he checked her.

"Keep your seat," he said, "I can get a chair for myself. Can't I help you? Won't you let me try?"

The girl looked up at him gratefully.

"You're very kind, sir," she replied unsteadily. "I'm sorry to trouble you. Please let me get you a chair."

Esdaile drew a chair to her side and sat down.

"The trouble is yours, my poor girl," he said gently, "and I'd let you alone, only I fancy it is half my fault."

"I don't see how that can be, sir," rejoined Alice. "This is an old trouble, and no one can help me. Besides, you've enough to bear of your own."

Tears again filled her eyes, and Esdaile, touched by her answer, and feeling keenly his kinship with all grief, laid his hand upon hers.

"Forgive me," he said, with exquisite gentleness. "You haven't seen Frank Varcoe, have you?"

Alice looked at him in amazement, and Esdaile added—

"I shall blame myself if you have, because he is here on my account."

"You don't know him, sir?" she exclaimed, bewildered. "I don't understand; I never told any one. Only father knows."

"Varcoe and I are great friends," said Esdaile.

"You and Frank!" she gasped. Then very simply, with her clear eyes fixed upon his, she said, "He and I were to have been married, sir. We parted——"

"He told me the whole story," interposed Esdaile.

"Don't blame him overmuch, sir; perhaps you know that there are some men no mortal hand can hold in. I've loved him; he's not wanted for love. It's the sort of spirit he has—and the drink. I saw him awhile ago—in the plantation—and he looked—— I can't, sir; it breaks my heart! I'd rather see him dead—drinking and stealing."

Again Esdaile laid his hand over the girl's in mute sympathy. Then he began—

"But didn't he tell you——"

"Tell me what, sir?"

"Alice, do you mind my talking to you about Varcoe?"

"No, indeed, sir; I never could talk to any one; but to-day I've no strength, and it eases my mind to talk to you; besides, you're different, sir."

"I think I can give you some relief," Esdaile said. "Varcoe hasn't forgotten you."

"No more than I have him, sir; but I can't make him out at all."

"I'm not sure that I can," said Esdaile. "The poor fellow has been something of a hero. He told me once—the first time I came across him long ago—and I don't think I'm breaking confidence in telling you—that he wanted you to forget him, because it was best for you. I told him women never forget."

"Is that true, sir."

"Something that passed between us on that occasion," Esdaile went on, "made him grateful and devoted to me. I met him accidentally the other night. No—it wasn't by accident," he added in a lower tone. "That first night I saw him, Alice, I had a dream about him and—and Teresa!"

He paused; the mere mention of the loved name always tried him; but he conquered. "Somehow she had gone," he continued, in a still lower tone than before, "and Varcoe had come. And, when I saw him a few nights back, the dream flashed into my mind; it wasn't chance—you'll understand."

"Yes, sir," said Alice quietly.

"He's helping me to try to find her. The sort of life he has led makes him just the man I want. I told him he couldn't serve me unless he gave up drink; he has promised he will. He wouldn't touch a thing of mine, or of any one else's, when I bid him not.

"He wouldn't hear of taking the reward I offered; he scarcely likes taking the weekly wage I give him. He would serve me for nothing, only he must live. That last theft of his was only after he had struggled for work and at last was starving; then he took but little—enough for food and shelter."

The girl had turned aside, clasping her hands tightly over her knee, her head bent down. Esdaile added, in a soft tone.

"I talk as if he did all this for me—but it's for you."

"Oh," said the girl in a choked voice, "I'm not hurt that some one else gets hold of him when I couldn't, least of all you, sir. It's often so. It don't matter, and you mustn't think I mind. I'd give him up to some other woman if she'd do more for him than I could."

"Alice, you are one in a thousand!" said Esdaile.

"I, sir?" She turned towards him in surprise, and shook her head. "Any woman would feel so that loved a man truly. I don't say I wouldn't be sore-hearted, but if he were happier, and living as he ought——"

"Alice, you are swaying him now as you have all along," said Esdaile earnestly; "the opportunity has been mine—that's all. There are depths he hasn't gone to—things he hasn't done, that the men he has lived with think nothing of. You've had your hand on him when he didn't know it. Love like yours can't be wasted—I'll never believe it. As for him—he thinks he's not fit to touch the hem of your dress. A man like that will come back in the end."

"I'm glad he didn't tell me," said Alice, her eyes bright and glistening; "and yet I'm sorry—he'll be breaking his heart over it. As if he could make me forget him! You see, sir—*forgive me* for talking so to you, but it's as if you knew all I feel——"

"Yes—I know," interposed Esdaile, in a low tone. "It's as much for your sake as for his that I'm doing what I can."

"Heaven bless you, sir! I was going to say there's memories between a man and a woman who've loved each other that can't be put away; and, whichever does wrong, so that it's all over between them, there are the old times always keeping the love fresh.

"That's how it is with him and me. And then there's some people you can't help loving, do what they will. It isn't the good that's in them—not always."

"It's a thing you can't explain," said Esdaile, "in many cases. But with Varcoe I think one can lay hold of it. I quite understand you. He too remembers those old times—only a man has never so much of the angel in him as a woman has.

"I don't think he will fail us. And I—it may be superstition, and yet I think not—but I can't help believing there is something in that dream, and something in the old tradition about those rubies."

Alice looked at him inquiringly, too respectful to ask a direct question on a subject that she knew Esdaile could scarcely enter upon.

"It is said they overrule calamity," he went on, in reply to that inquiring glance, "and, so long as they are in my possession, I cling to that tradition. But my first real hope came when I saw Varcoe."

"Did it, sir?" she exclaimed, her soft eyes sparkling. "I'm sure I pray with all my heart the hope may come true! And perhaps, sir, when you're down here——" She hesitated. "Though I oughtn't to ask it—you've enough to do."

"I'll let you know from time to time how Varcoe gets on," said Esdaile gently. "I am glad you have asked me. I'll look after him for you, Alice."

"You deserve to be happy, sir," the girl replied, with tears of gratitude in her eyes, "and I believe you will be."

Esdaile flushed as he rose, and half turned aside; but whatever emotion he had wanted to hide had passed when Alice again spoke.

"Are you going back to town at once, sir?"

"Yes. I looked in on my way to the station. I am afraid I must get on now. Good-bye, Alice! Thank you for your confidence in me!"

"It's I that owe thanks, sir," she said. "It's like you said of yourself just now—I've got a bit of hope. I hadn't seen him for years, sir; I only heard about his getting into prison. And then he comes back, and only tells me the bad of himself and never the good; so that he shows me the good all the more—Heaven bless him!"

Esdaile wrung her hand silently and left the house.

As he did not see Varcoe for some days, he began to feel somewhat uneasy; the meeting with Alice might have driven the man back into the depths. Partly to give himself something to do while he was waiting, he went to call on the Wyndhams, who had returned to town.

Mabel made no remark about Esdaile's changed looks, but the sight of him almost overcame her. She knew from his letters that the search for Teresa was still unsuccessful, but he had said nothing of Varcoe or the fresh steps he had taken.

To Esdaile the visit was full of acute pain; everything about the place served to remind him of the many occasions when he had come to this drawing-room with the lightest and happiest of hearts. The only difference was the significant "Not at home" order to the man who brought in the tea, and which Esdaile had not been meant to hear.

He talked on in the endeavor to forget his pain; but the result was only a terrible collapse when he reached home—home, such as it was, without a welcome, empty with a ghastly emptiness. If Varcoe would only make some sign!

CHAPTER XXI.

VARCOE went back to town more than ever determined to assist Derek Esdaile. He soon found some of his old friends; but he made no discoveries. The "Invincibles," whom he persistently suspected, were not easy to catch. One of them, Mat, seemed to have dropped out of the land.

The ordinary thieves whom he had already come across he put aside—they were not the people he wanted; they were neither clever nor daring enough to have managed the Leigh's Hollow business. A serious difficulty arose from his promise to Esdaile not to touch any drink. How was he to ingratiate himself with his old friends unless he drank with them? At the time the promise was made he had not thought of this contingency.

With the men he had already encountered he had managed to avoid drinking by assuming an air of semi-intoxication; but that sort of thing would not do when he wanted to lull suspicion. Just as he was at his wits' end, he came across Jasper Linton.

"Forgotten me?" exclaimed Varcoe, with a laugh.

"Where have you been?" inquired Linton, looking wonderingly at Varcoe, who was a little less pallid and hollow-eyed than when he had last seen him.

Varcoe noticed the glance, and quickly took advantage of it.

"Come and have a drink, and I'll tell you," he said.

Linton could not resist the temptation, for he looked upon Varcoe as a valuable ally, whom it would be well to secure. He followed readily to the first public house, and, in response to Varcoe's invitation, said he would have some of his favorite spirit—gin.

"I'll have beer," said Frank, and sat as far as he could from his companion's tempting glass. "I haven't got your steady head, Jasper. As things are now, spirits are no go."

"What?" ejaculated Jasper.

Varcoe nodded and laughed.

"Hang the stone jug!" he exclaimed recklessly. "I'll risk it."

"Ah, I thought you couldn't stand to that fad!" said Linton, rubbing his hands. "You look all the better for it, Frank. Food and drink—that's the ticket! I was spotting you; I couldn't make out how you got any money at all."

"Easily got," replied Varcoe, with his hand on the glass of beer beside him. "Ugh—this is beastly poor stuff!"

"Working alone?" inquired Linton.

"Yes—at present." He raised the glass slowly. Suppose he failed? Suppose the taste of the drink made him long for something more fiery? A feeling of sickness came over him. If Esdaile lost faith in him, and he went down—down once more!

Would Alice and Esdaile forgive him if they knew? He longed for the drink and at the same time shudderingly recoiled from it, then suddenly emptied the glass of beer at a gulp.

"That sort of work don't pay," he continued, speaking rapidly to crush down his thoughts. "Hanging round for work nobody'll give you, and then a few pence maybe!"

"You're a man of spirit," said Linton admiringly; "but you can't stand gin. That's odd—you used to."

"When I wasn't on to work," explained Varcoe knowingly. He inquired about the other "Invincibles," especially Dick. He was not slow to see that Linton answered with a certain amount of reserve. Was he suspicious, or was Dick's old jealousy at work?

Varcoe had been very well aware of that feeling—he had been the leading spirit in the band, and Dick had disliked him.

He could get nothing of any real importance out of Linton—nothing of the "'Invincibles'" movements, risks, successes, though he questioned skilfully.

"What the mischief is in it?" he thought, on his way to his lodging to make himself look respectable. As a matter of course he must tell Esdaile at once about the broken promise.

"I wish I hadn't come across Linton that time at the 'Chequers.' Or is there anything they don't want me to know? I believe they did that Dampier plate affair; yet if they did, they don't work as they used to when I was with them."

The days slipped by, and no success attended the seemingly hopeless search. He made little progress with the "Invincibles," and at last went down to the village where the cart had been brought. One or two apparently trifling facts that he unearthed there strengthened his suspicion that no ordinary respectable market gardener had made the purchase. He returned to London, and occupied himself in trying to discover his old comrades.

Dick, when he heard of Varcoe's reappearance in his original character, set his face against Frank rejoining the band.

"If he is working by himself, let him," he said. "Our methods and his won't go hand-in-hand. And you may say what you like—he has scruples."

"So have you," declared Linton, with a sneer. "Your memory is short. I expect you don't want Varcoe to know how that venture went. You boasted as if they were going to do miracles, and you've landed us in a bog."

"Wait a while," replied Dick; "we'll manage presently. They'll get tired of their work. Anyhow, if Varcoe is admitted, I cut the concern."

Dick was practically master; his ultimatum settled the matter, and Varcoe made no headway.

Stephen Hall began to think that the whole business was a forlorn hope. Mr. Esdaile persisted in believing in his wife's absolute faith and integrity, but certainly no one else did. Hall was not told of Varcoe's doings, and he never inquired—professional jealousy prevented him.

Town was again filling for the winter season, but at the small friendly dinners, musical evenings, and informal dances Derek Esdaile was never seen. Occasionally he went to the houses of intimate friends or near relatives when he was sure that no guests would be present.

Lady Wyndham declared that he was looking ill, and prophesied a breakdown. As to Varcoe, he divided his anxious thoughts between the problem which puzzled him and Esdaile. He sometimes ventured to make a remark on Derek's look.

"It's wearing work, of course," he said once.

"What does that mean?" inquired Esdaile, smiling. "Some old friends of mine tell me I'm not looking well. I'm perfectly well!"

"Are you, sir?"—doubtfully. "Seems to me as if you didn't get much sleep."

Varcoe looked at him affectionately, and Esdaile's eyes softened. It was strange that there should be such a strong feeling of sympathy between these two men, so dissimilar in character, so far apart in social position, training, and habits of life.

Yet there was no one of his own rank to whom Esdaile could talk as freely as to Varcoe; there was no one who could talk to him as Varcoe might without giving him pain. In Varcoe's presence he would utter Teresa's name—it never passed his lips before any one else.

Esdaile often thought of Alice's words—"There's some people you can't help loving."

So now he made an answer to Varcoe's remark that he would have made to no one else.

"No—I can't sleep—that's true. I shall get through somehow, Varcoe."

"You don't worry ever about me, sir—do you? I've never touched a drop I did not need so, sure as I stand here! I'd tell you if I had—I would?" Varcoe said in the eager way habitual to him when he was desperately earnest.

"Suppose I did worry about you," said Esdaile; "would you think I didn't trust you?"

"Well, you an't sir—can you, now?"

"I am afraid sometimes," said Esdaile, turning aside. "I don't think you'd ever give way; and yet I know the temptation."

"Suppose I did, sir—suppose I did give in—you wouldn't turn me off? Just for once, I mean."

"For once—no. But I should be sorry."

"Yes—I know that," said Varcoe, in a softer tone: "that's why I try, sir. But don't trust me yet; I'll have to get that—it's like something to look for. Sometimes it's hard—when the liquor is there; it's as if I'd go mad and not care what happened; then you come across me, and I think how you've got a deal already——"

He stopped, and brushed his hand across his eyes.

"Besides, how should I answer to Alice?" said Esdaile very gently.

Varcoe was silent; his eyes were fixed upon the ground, his whole aspect downcast.

There was never the temptation to drink in this house; food and drink the man had whenever he needed them; but he never saw any wine. Esdaile himself took very little, and would not have it on the table when Varcoe was present.

He watched over the man more assiduously than ever, keeping him in hand with a mingling of tenderness and strength that swayed Varcoe irresistibly. The first faint hope of redeeming himself stole into the man's heart like the breath of spring over winter snows. But he never dreamed of Alice.

CHAPTER XXII.

IT was dusk in Mabel Wyndham's drawing room; she was chatting with Blanche Gifford, and had not thought of ringing for lights.

Of course they were talking of the subject which was constantly discussed in their circle, and indeed pretty frequently outside it—the unaccountable disappearance of Teresa Esdaile.

"I haven't seen him at all—not indeed since his marriage day," said Blanche, who was, as usual, handsomely dressed and looked very well. "I asked him to call, as you know, when he came to town after this terrible affair."

"Yes; but he sees no one," replied Mabel; "he is rarely even here."

"And how is he?" inquired Blanche sympathetically.

"Just in that state, though he will not have it, that certainty one way or the other will cause a collapse. He looks worn out. How he bears up at all I cannot make out! It's the most frightful thing I ever heard of! He was devoted to that child, and she has vanished as completely as if she had been one of the fairy brides of legend. People say all sorts of horrible things—call Esdaile a fool for refusing to see the truth."

"Yes—very shocking and cruel; but one can scarcely wonder. It was an unpopular marriage; and people who did not know Teresa would naturally attribute her disappearance to the worst cause. What is Esdaile doing?"

"Detectives," replied Lady Wyndham; "but they seem to have done no good. The poor child may be dead or breaking her heart. It won't bear thinking of!" She broke off shudderingly, then, after a pause, added, "She must be dead, and the murderers are afraid to claim the reward; that is the only possible solution."

"I should like to see Esdaile," said Mrs. Gifford. "I must confess his holding aloof has rather pained me."

"This looks a little like him," said Mabel, as the door opened and some one entered the room. "Derek, is that you? It's so dim away from the fire I can't see."

Esdaile's voice answered out of the darkness, and he stepped forward to where the two ladies sat. Lady Wyndham was nearest to him, and he did not notice the other lady, but bent down to Mabel to shake hands.

"Mrs. Gifford, Derek," said Lady Wyndham, looking up at him with a smile because she knew that Blanche's presence would cause him pain.

Esdaile crossed over at once to Mrs. Gifford.

"I'm afraid I didn't recognise you in the dark," he said, holding out his hand. "I think you have been out of town, haven't you?"

"Only for part of September. I'm so glad to see you again, Mr. Esdaile!" replied Blanche in her sweetest tones, although she was exceedingly angry at his easy conventional manner, which placed her at a distance as a mere acquaintance. "It seems years since we last met. But all this terrible affair——"

Esdaile winced; the merest touch on the open wound was agony.

"It is very good of you to take so much interest," he said quietly, then turned to Mabel, asking if she had any tea left.

Derek began to talk, to inquire where Blanche had been, carefully avoiding any reference to his own affairs. He was sitting by Mabel and facing the fire, which now blazed brightly.

Blanche could see plainly how changed he was, and she watched him as if she were fascinated, leaning back in her chair while she took her part in the conversation, so that her face was completely in the shade.

She tried to bring the conversation round to Teresa, but Esdaile completely baffled her. He rose to go soon; but she was determined to find out something, so, when he wished her "Good bye," she said:—

"Can't I do anything to help you? One can't say much, but indeed I feel it! I was so fond of Teresa—so grieved to lose her, even when it was only handing her over to you. Perhaps I can help you, if you would only let me."

She saw him grow paler; for to hear this woman, who had made use of Teresa, profess love for his darling, to feel that she was feigning grief for some inexplicable reason of her own—perhaps to regain her footing with him, to try to fool him to countenance her—was almost more than he could bear.

"Thank you very much," he said quietly. "I think there is nothing you could do for me."

"Are you sure? These detectives seem at a loss. They have found no traces."

"No," replied Esdaile, in the same constrained manner—"not as yet. I am deeply obliged to you, Mrs. Gifford; there is no way in which you can help me."

"Not if I ask you to come and see me sometimes, and relieve my anxiety as well as your own?" she said gently.

"When there is any success I will let you know," rejoined Esdaile; "you may be quite sure of that."

He gently loosed Blanche's hand, bade Mabel "Good bye," then left the room.

When he reached home he sank into an easy chair before the fire, and in spite of all his efforts gave way to a terrible paroxysm of grief.

He sat, covering his face with his hands, till a slight sound caused him to look up. The fire had almost gone out; but some one was kneeling before it, making it up as gently as a nurse in a sick-room. Half stupefied, Esdaile looked at the man, scarcely realising that it was Varcoe.

"It's cold, sir," said the man.

Esdaile made no answer, but apathetically watched the fire. He was glad it was Varcoe who had come in, instead of Harris.

"What's happened?" Varcoe wondered. "What has he heard? I never saw him beaten down like that."

When the fire was burning brightly, Varcoe went silently out of the room. Esdaile's exhaustion frightened him. He knew where to find things—there was wine in the dining room, and the cellaret was unlocked. He was not afraid of himself; he would sooner have drunk poison than have touched a drop of wine just now.

"I've brought you some wine, sir," he said gently, a few minutes later, closing the study door and approaching Esdaile, who had moved his chair nearer to the fire, as if he appreciated the warmth. "You'll try and drink it?"—for Esdaile made no effort to take the glass. At the quiet words he looked up into the man's face and put out his hand for the wine, sipping it slowly, while Varcoe stood by.

"Don't wait—take that chair near the fire," said Esdaile gently.

The sense of being cared for—and cared for so tenderly—the warmth, the restorative—all helped Esdaile to rally.

"You're like a woman, Varcoe," he said, in his usual clear low tones.

"Am I, sir?"

Varcoe could not understand why; but he supposed it was right if Esdaile said so. He crossed the hearth and sat down, not venturing to ask any questions, and half afraid to say he had brought no good news.

"I'm very churlish not to thank you," said Derek, breaking the silence.

"I wouldn't have come in, sir, only the fire was nearly out, and it looked lonesome like."

"Oh, I don't mind you," said Esdaile—"I never should! I don't know why I was so stupid; but I'm better now, and you needn't look anxious."

"I wish I'd some very good news to bring you," faltered Varcoe; "but I haven't any—no news at all! I think my old companions are somehow afraid of me. I've odd thoughts about it, and yet I've none at all, if you take me, sir. You haven't heard anything—have you?"

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

No man can be truly known until he is seen through the eyes of love.

Bric-a-Brac.

HELMETS.—The Roman helmet of the average size weighed about two pounds, and was thickly lined with felt, so that a severe blow could be borne without serious inconvenience. These helmets were intolerably hot, however, and were never worn during the march, or at any time save on parade, sentry, or guard duty, or in the immediate presence of the enemy.

FORESTS.—Large tracts of dense forests in Australia are practically shadeless. Many kinds of tree in that strange country turn the edges instead of the flat surfaces of the leaves to the sun, and thus one may stand under a tree of enormous size, and sometimes be as fully exposed to the sun as though he were in the open plain. Travel through these forests is said to be exceedingly arduous work, as the trees, while they do not cut off the sun, prevent the breeze from reaching the ground, and thus the traveller experiences a stifling heat.

THE TREE.—The Christmas Tree was almost unknown in England until introduce by Prince Albert from its home, Germany. The vegetable creation has attained many features of loveliness apart from these decorations. The "naked majesty" of the oak, the gracefulness of "the cold-place loving birch," and willow, whose pendent branches "tremble touch the water's brink," elicit the admiration of the observer; while, with the exception of the larch, the numerous species of fir and pine retain their leaves, and variegate the disrobed grove with their unfading verdure.

THE MOUNT OF FOOTPRINTS.—In a recent letter an African missionary says he is presumably the first white man to see the Mount of Footprints, which he thus describes: "At last we came to one large mount of rocks on the top of the hills. Here are thousands of impressions on the granite rock. Hundreds of human footsteps, thousands of footprints of animals—lions, jackals, wolves, and antelopes. On the top of the mount the appearance is as if a crowd of animals and men had rushed together in fright. At whatever period these footprints were made, it must have been before the outer surface of the rock had hardened. The distance from where the footprints begin to where they culminate on the mount is 200 yards.

TURKISH JUSTICE.—A Turkish sister, being at work on the roof of a house, fell into the street upon a wealthy old man, whom he killed, without any serious injury to himself. The son of the deceased caused him to be arrested and carried before the cadi, with whom he used all his influence to have the poor man condemned; and though the innocence of the latter was clearly established, nothing would serve him but the law of retaliation. The cadi accordingly sentenced the sister to be placed exactly upon the spot where he was at the moment of the accident, and you, said he to the son, will go on the roof of the house, fall down upon the sister and kill him if you can.

IN TWENTY-FIVE YEARS.—An illustration of the rapidity with which certain kinds of trees grow is curiously connected with the story of the uprising of the Cubans against their Spanish masters twenty-five years ago. At that time, during a fight near Manzanillo, the insurrectionists destroyed the buildings belonging to a large sugar plantation. In one of the mills there were some gigantic wheels, which were left lying upon the ground. A young jaggery tree sprouted up from the ground between two spokes of one of the wheels, and now, with its trunk enclosed between the spokes and the rim of the still existing wheel, has grown to such an extent that a score of men could sit comfortably together in its shadow.

WAR DOGS.—Some interesting experiments are to be made next month at Dresden with dogs, in order to ascertain to what extent they can be used for purposes of war. To show that they can be relied upon to carry despatches, they will have to accomplish a journey of upwards of three miles out and home again, while a number of barriers will be purposely placed in their way to be surmounted. The most trying circumstances of all to the competitors is the fact that they will be required not to loiter about, although other dogs will be posted, with detachments of men, along the line of route. The experiments are intended to bring out the qualities of the animals as regards their training and discipline, their capacity for carrying despatches, for guarding a camp, for seeking out the wounded, and for carrying munitions.

BEST OF ALL.

BY M. M. S.

"Noel—Noel!" The Christmas bells chime forth
Their old sweet tale across the gleaming snow,
And bid us think upon the Child who lay
Within a lowly manger years ago.
The fair moon glides above the white-robed world
And conquers darkness with her silv'ry light.
I wonder if she cast a radiant gleam
O'er Bethlehem on that first Christmas night!

Down in the moon-kissed garden all the trees
Stand gaunt and leafless in the shadowy light;
But pow'dry snowflakes on the dark boughs rest,
The moonbeams glist'ning on their spotless white.
The Frost-King touches with his finger chill
Each branch and twig, that glitt'ring jewels may
Shine forth against the clear blue winter sky
In the fair sunshine of the coming day.

He waits at many a window-pane to trace
A fairy-scene, to charm the children's eyes
When first they open, as the rosente dawn
Steals slowly up the frosty eastern skies
The children sleep in palace, hall, and cot,
And dream of all the Christmas joy to be,
When Santa Claus creeps through the nursery door,
And fills the shoes with presents fair to see.

But some wee ones are lone and sad to-night,
Poor homeless wand'rers in the bitter cold;
Forget not, loved ones of a wealthy home,
For them the pitying Saviour came of old.
He came not as a monarch proud and great—
His royal cradle was a cattle stall,
Enthroned now, 'mid Heav'n's effulgent light,
Methinks He loves the lowly best of all!

MARRED BY FATE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "GLORY'S LOVERS," "AN ARCH-IMPOSTOR," "HUSHED UP!" "A LOVER FROM OVER THE SEA," ETC."

CHAPTER XXIV.—(CONTINUED.)

GLAVE drew a long breath of relief and satisfaction. He had chosen market day for the trip, but he could scarcely have dared to hope that things would turn out for him so well as they had.

"We'll go down to-morrow," he said, "and have a more cheerful day than you had on Tuesday, I hope."

Bruce started.

"Tuesday," he said, "why, yes, of course! I was in Elford on Tuesday, and Oasle couldn't have seen me in Chelsea in the afternoon."

Glave was reaching for his glass as Bruce uttered this exclamation, and he nearly let the glass fall.

Bruce laughed.

"You are good at spilling your liquor, Glave," he said. "Where did Desmond go? I want to speak to him. Of course, it was Tuesday!"

"What do you mean?" asked Glave, with a smile; but his face was pale and his lips twitched.

"Oh, nothing much; only that Desmond swears that he saw me in Cadogan Square last Tuesday; swears to my peculiar physiognomy and my very clothes, and I'm going to crow over him."

Glave laid his hand on Bruce's arm.

"I wouldn't do it, if I were you, Ravenhurst," he said. "When a man's made up his mind about anything, he gets annoyed if you contradict him. What does it matter whether Oasle—Lord Desmond—thinks he saw you or not? You'll rile him if you crow over him. I noticed that he looked upset when I came in."

"Do you think so?" said Bruce hesitatingly, and full of consideration for his chum's feelings. "Well, perhaps you're right. I won't say anything about it. After all, as you say, it doesn't matter."

"Not a bit, I should think," said Glave, with secret relief. "Such mistakes are as common as flies in summer. Shall we go down to the Mohawks for an hour or two?"

Bruce shook his head, resolutely.

"No, thanks," he said, firmly, and with a slight flush. "I don't mean going to the Mohawks again. In fact"—he paused; then went on in a low voice—"Glave, I have been playing the common or garden ass, lately, but I've done with it!"

Glave looked at him curiously.

Bruce rang for his coat and hat.

"Yes; I've done with it."

"I see!" said Glave, with a nod. "Want to take a clear head on board?"

"Yes," Bruce assented. "When does the vessel sail? I am anxious to be off—that is, in a few days."

"On Thursday next," said Glave, watching him closely. "Sorry you can't go earlier, as you seem so keen on it."

"I couldn't go until then," said Bruce.

"No?" inquired Glave.

"No; I have something to do first, before I leave England." He spoke almost to himself, and seemed to forget Glave. "We go down then, by the twelve o'clock train, I suppose?"

Glave assented, and Bruce, with a nod which serves us nowadays for "good night," left the club.

Glave drained his glass, and ordered it to be refilled; and, as he wiped the perspiration from his brow, pondered—

"Confound that fellow, Desmond! And I've proved the day, too! If I hadn't mentioned Tuesday—— But it will be hard if we can't confuse the two days, if there should be any need of it!"

They went down to Elford the next day; and, on the following, at the time appointed, Bruce was pacing up and down in front of the seat waiting for Jess.

The time that had elapsed since their meeting had still further improved his appearance, and it was the old Bruce—though pale and thinner—who went towards the slim figure which made its way under the trees to the meeting place.

He could not take her in his arms, but he gripped her hand tightly, and gazed at her with all his love in his eyes. She stood for a moment or two silent under his regard, and he noticed that she looked pale and anxious.

"Jess," he said, in a low voice, "you are not regretting? You don't want to draw back? I know you have every reason to—more reasons than you can guess!—but——. Jess, what is it? I can see that there is something the matter; I can read that sweet face of yours like a book. You are not sorry for your promise? I'll—I'll give it you back, Jess, if you are; though it will break my heart in the giving."

"No, no!" she said, in a low, tremulous voice, and just returning the pressure of his strong hand. "It—it is my father, Bruce!"

"Your father?" He was filled with apprehension. "You have not told him, Jess?"

"No," she said, simply. But—but there is bad news. When I got home, the other evening, I saw him troubled and anxious about some letters he had received from abroad, and—and"—her voice faltered, and the tears came into her eyes—"he told me that he might have to go back to Africa, and—and perhaps at once!"

Bruce drew her to the seat in silence for a moment.

"And you will be left behind, Jess? Oh! I cannot leave you!"

"Yes," she said, with the firmness of a gentle woman; "you must go, Bruce!"

"And leave you alone? And, Jess—all is arranged. I've found out how to manage the marriage. It is done with a licence, and at a registrar's—— Don't tremble, Jess!"

"It is not because I am afraid," she murmured.

"My darling! But, Jess, where will you go? You will not go with him?" he exclaimed.

She shook her head.

"No; he will be traveling—it would not be safe for me," she said.

He thought for a moment.

"Jess, go to my aunt! She will—great Heavens! how delighted she will be!"

She looked up at him.

"Are you sure, Bruce? I—I thought of her——"

In his relief and excitement he sprang up.

"The very thing! Go and propose it, and see how she'll jump at it! Dear old lady! Will you?"

"Yes," she said, simply.

"Then, that's settled! He drew a long breath. "I shall leave you in good hands now, Jess. And, now, listen. We must be married on Wednesday!"

She started, and the blood rushed to her face.

"On—Wednesday?" she breathed.

"Yes, dearest," he replied, and, in a low voice, he went on to explain his plans; but all the time he was speaking her heart was saying:

"On Wednesday.

CHAPTER XXV.

JESS went home, after leaving Bruce, trembling, and scarcely knowing where she was walking.

She was to be married to him, to be Bruce's wife, on Wednesday!

Her father was out when she reached Portmore Gardens, but he came in soon afterwards, and went straight to her little boudoir.

If he had not been engrossed with business, he must have noticed her agitation; but he was wholly absorbed in his own affairs, and nothing else.

"Jess, I shall have to go to Africa!" he said, with a return of his old abruptness. "I have had a couple of cables to-day, and letters pointing out that my presence is absolutely necessary. There is a crisis over there, and I shall have a hard fight to save my property." He set his lips tight and knit his brows.

"If I go over at once, I may not only succeed in doing that, but—well, there may be more money to be made. It is from such opportunities as this that fortunes are made—and lost.

"Now, as I said, I can't take you. That, alas! is impossible. I may have to go into the interior; and, in any case, the country is no place just now for a young girl. Where will you go? Back to Ravenhurst with a companion—some elderly woman, who will take charge of you—or—or would you like to go back to Miss Shaddock's?"

Jess suppressed a shudder.

"Couldn't I go and stay with Lady Marvelle, father?"

He started, and looked at her, and then at the ground.

"She would have you? Yes; I can well imagine that she would be glad to—but—but—there is Lord Ravenhurst, Jess. You would meet him there; and I should be away!" He paced up and down.

Jess hung her head. It was the first time she had deceived her father, and her heart ached guiltily.

"Lord Ravenhurst is going abroad, father!" she said.

"Are you sure?" he said.

"Yes, he sails on—on Thursday," she said.

He lifted his head.

"It is the best thing he could do! You heard it from Lady Marvelle, I suppose? Well, in that case, I should have no objection to your going to her. I should not be away long, and, if I should be detained there, you could come out when things are quieter.

"So Lord Ravenhurst is going abroad!" he added, almost to himself, and with an air of relief. "I hope he will remain there, at any rate, until——"

He did not say "until you have ceased to care for him," but Jess understood, and her face reddened guiltily.

"How soon will you have to go, father?" she asked in a low voice.

"As soon as possible. There is a vessel sails on Thursday,"—Jess started—"but I'm afraid I cannot get off by that. Jess! my heart fails me at the thought of leaving you! God only knows how dear you are to me, my child!"

He left the room hastily, as if to hide his emotion from her, and Jess sank into a chair and had a good cry. She was losing both father and—and husband!

The next day she went round to Manchester Square, and Lady Marvelle received her with open arms, so to speak.

"My dear, your father has just told me the good news! He has only just gone! I can't tell you how happy he has made me! You will really be like a daughter to me, and the thought of having you with me fills me with gladness.

"Jess—I must call you Jess now, must I not?—you will try and be happy with me, dear? I shall not be a very strict chaperon, and you shall do as you like; for I know that you are one of those girls an old woman can trust, as well as love."

Once more—and, ah! not for the last time—a pang of self-reproach smote Jess. What a monster of deceit she would some day be proved to these people who trusted, as well as loved her!

"And I have more good news," said the old lady, as she poured out the tea. "I saw Bruce last night."

Jess blushed and started.

"Yes; he came in after dinner—came striding in, and put his arm round me and kissed me, in the old way. And he was quite altered; I mean, that he was quite his old self—bright and cheerful, and in high spirits—though now and again he seemed grave and full of thought; but, no doubt, that was because he was going away so far. For you will be surprised to hear, dear, that he was going to Africa!"

"To Africa," murmured Jess.

Lady Marvelle nodded and looked at the downcast face sympathetically.

"Yes; I don't know whether you will be glad or sorry, Jess; but I think you ought to be glad. There is a chance of his—of his keeping straight out there, in a new life, and with something to do. There would be none here."

"I—I am glad!" said Jess.

The old lady nodded at her lovingly.

"You are a good, unselfish girl, Jess!" she said approvingly. "Yes, he was quite changed. Of course, he looked rather pale and worn"—she sighed—"but the voyage will restore his strength and health. I did not say anything of having seen him the other night, and he said nothing to me—nothing whatever.

"It is best so," she added, with that knowledge of men, and their folly which women acquire long before they reach her age. "Silence is golden, Jess, on these occasions. No Clanamere was ever the better for being preached at, especially by an old woman.

"And you are to come to me as soon as your father sails. I must try and help you to bear the loss of him, dear." Jess' eyes filled with tears. "And I must not let you mope or get bored. We will be quite gay, in a small way, shall we? You will have your horse, and I must get a small victoria."

And, with evident delight she continued to make plans for Jess' enjoyment and happiness, until Jess rose to go.

At the same time, Bruce was hard at work making preparations, and Mr. Glave was, with disinterested kindness, for which Bruce was duly grateful, assisting him.

It seemed as if there was no point or detail which Mr. Glave was unacquainted with. He knew all about the outfit that was necessary, and went with Bruce to purchase it.

He himself booked the passage, securing a good berth, and adding a few luxuries to those already existing.

He purchased Bruce's horses, and gave a good price for them, too; and even offered—in the most delicate way—to lend Bruce some money to pay off the most pressing debts, and start him on his new career.

But Bruce declined the loan.

"You are behaving like a brick and a brother, Glave," he said, as he stood in his shirt sleeves, in the middle of a pile of things he was packing—Gurdon being similarly occupied in another room—"better than most brothers, by Jove! But I can manage the coin all right. My governor has arrived in London—came last night—and I can get what I want from him. I am going round to see him directly I've jammed in this last lot.

"Yes; you have stood by me like a friend, Glave; and, though I haven't said much about it, I'm grateful, and I'll promise you I shan't forget it! Some day, if I come back from over there"—his voice grew grave as he spoke, for he thought of Jess—"I may be able to prove my gratitude.

"Meanwhile, I'll send you all the tips I can. If you don't hear pretty regularly from me—if the letters cease—you may conclude that I have gone to join the majority."

He fell a-whistling a moment afterwards, and Glave eyed him curiously.

"You have picked up your spirits wonderfully these last few days, Ravenhurst!" he said thoughtfully. "Anyone would think you had come into a fortune, or had heard some particularly good news."

Bruce stopped whistling and humming, and looked before him thoughtfully. Should he tell this good and true friend the cause of his cheerfulness, and what he was going to do on Wednesday? No; better not, perhaps, he decided. And he fell to at his packing again, Glave assisting by pitching one thing and another across the room.

A little later on, he went off to the quiet hotel in Mayfair at which the earl always put up when he was making too short a stay in London for it to be worth while getting the big house ready, and was shown up to his father's room.

The earl shook hands, and looked at him with a half-veiled keenness which showed that he had heard of Bruce's latest rampage.

"Yes; I got here last night," he said. "Most abominable passage, and I am trying to forget it! You are still in London, Bruce. Why not go down to Leicester and get some shooting—and there'll be the hunting directly? I'll wire and tell them to have the shooting box ready for you."

He made the suggestion in the most casual way, as if he knew of no other reason for recommending Bruce to quit the gay city than his own pleasure and enjoyment; Bruce understood, and grew tender-hearted with gratitude for the old man's forbearance and delicacy.

"I am going far her than Leicestershire, father," he said very quietly. "I leave for Africa on Thursday."

The earl did not start, but he raised his brows and gazed at his son for an instant, then looked steadily out of the window.

"Africa! What on earth for? Excuse me, my dear Bruce—but, Africa!"

"I've got a commission in the Border force," said Bruce. "It's better that I should go," he went on in a low voice, and looking out of the window also.

He knew that his father was cut up, but that he would be still more cut up if he thought Bruce saw it.

"There is no good my hanging about London—or anywhere else here, for that matter—and there is a chance of fighting over there——"

"And getting wounded, or—" put in the earl, with a smile that was no smile.

"We take our chance of that, sir!" said Bruce; "but I'm not going to get hospitaled or knocked on the head, if I can help it."

"And—I don't want to appear unduly inquisitive, my dear Bruce—but is that your only reason for seeking a foreign and intensely savage shore?"

Bruce hesitated a moment. It was hard to deceive the old man, who was so fond of him.

"There is another reason, sir; but——"

"You are not at liberty to mention it?" put in the earl, quietly. "I understand. I don't want to force your confidence, Bruce. But may I say that I hope you are not going to get, or have not got, into some scrape worse and more desperate than usual."

Bruce hesitated again, and the earl had caused to remember the hesitation.

"I'm afraid you would think it a scrape—you wouldn't approve, sir," he said, knowing full well how keenly his father would resent his son's making a clandestine marriage. Anything in the shape of a scandal was abhorrent to the earl, and a secret marriage, with all the clack of tongues which must result when it was made known, would wound him in his tenderest spot.

"But—well," he added, "it is too late now. I couldn't go back if I would. And I wouldn't; there are some things that must be done at any cost, and this is one of them. Don't think worse of me than you can help."

"I won't," said the earl, with his gently cynical smile. "I can promise that much. And, as we are on the subject—for I presume that this trouble has a woman at the bottom of it—may I, without being intrusive, venture to ask: What about that little girl, Miss Newton?" He sighed faintly.

"I will admit that I took a fancy to the child, and I should have been glad if time and patience—two extremely powerful factors in our affairs, my dear Bruce—could have brought you together. I know a little about women,"—he might, with much truth, have said that he knew a great deal—"and I have an idea that she would have made an excellent wife, and an admirable Countess of Clansmere."

Bruce stared at the carpet for nearly half a minute. It was hard not to be able to tell his father that his hope was going to be realized.

But Bruce knew that the earl would order his brougham and go straight to Mr. Newton with the intelligence. No clandestine marriage would receive the sanction or assistance of the Most Honorable the Earl of Clansmere.

"We won't talk about Je—Miss Newton, father," he said.

The earl nodded, almost bowed. It was Bruce's affair, and Bruce had a right to impose silence.

"And now you want more money, Bruce? Yes, of course. Fortunately, the Irish rents have come in. I reap the reward of being a good landlord, Bruce. Other men are still whistling for their rents, I am told; but our people have paid theirs, because, as they informed the agent, we have never asked for them, and you spent a couple of months killing foxes and drinking whiskey with them. I imagine the last performance won their hearts more than the first. May I trouble you for the check book from the dispatch box? Thanks."

There was a question as to the amount, which the earl settled by drawing a check for more than Bruce asked; for a sum, indeed, which would enable him to pay Glave the remainder of the debt owing to him, and some others into the bargain.

"You'll let me see as much of you as you can. Come round and spend Wednesday afternoon with me, Bruce."

Bruce turned his head away, and made something of a fuss in putting the check in his pocket book.

"Engaged on Wednesday afternoon, sir," he said. "I'll come after dinner, and stay the whole of the evening with you, if you are at home."

"Yes; do!" said the earl. "You won't mind my not going to Southampton, or wherever it is, to see you off, Bruce? I—well"—for the first time his voice shook, but he mastered it in a moment—"well—I don't think I could stand it. I mean"—quickly, as if ashamed of having expressed his emotion—"this gout still hangs about me, and——"

"Just so, sir," said Bruce, and his own voice quivered as he shook hands with the old man.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE English Marriage Law—like many others—wants overhauling and revising. It is full of inconsistencies, crudities, and even absurdities.

It is generally supposed that no one can now be married secretly, and that the novelist has to strain points, and ask his readers to swallow impossibilities, when he had to deal with a clandestine marriage.

This is a mistake. As a matter of fact, nothing is easier than for a couple to become man and wife without anyone, barring the registrar and a couple of witnesses, being any the wiser.

Bruce found this out very quickly. The royal road to secret marriage is the licence. He went to the office at which application was to be made, saw an old and weary-looking clerk, made a declaration—gabbled over by the clerk at breakneck pace—and signed a paper, which he did not read.

It was all delightfully easy, and, apparently, simple, and he walked off with the all powerful licence in his breast pocket, like a talisman, or an "Open Sesame" to future happiness.

The Wednesday dawned brightly, and one might well have imagined the month July or August, instead of late September; and Bruce, as he dressed, looking out of the window upon the sun, shining upon the other side of the street, and thought of the old saying, "Happy is the bride that the sun shines on," and wondered whether Jess knew the proverb and remembered it.

All the morning he was in a state of subdued excitement, and at one o'clock, having vainly endeavored to eat some lunch, he went out, and made his way to the old meeting place.

Though he had bestowed more thought on his wedding than he had ever bestowed on anything else in his life, as he walked along, his heart beating tumultuously, he asked himself whether, after all, he had left anything undone, or done anything he should not have done?

He had to wait, and, during the few minutes he spent pacing up and down, he endured all the agonies of suspense, doubt, and dread which can be crowded into that space of time.

Had her father discovered her intention—or was she ill? or was she prevented by some other cause from coming? Good Heaven! if she should not come, and he have to leave England without seeing her again!

It was a warm morning and the perspiration began to come out on his forehead. But presently he saw her, and, with a long breath of relief, went towards her.

"My darling!" he said, "I thought you weren't coming—that you had changed your mind, or—or been prevented!"

"My father," said Jess, with a little catch in her voice, "my father—he wanted me to go out with him to-day—and—I could scarcely get away."

Bruce pressed her hand stealthily.

"Oh, Bruce! I am almost frightened. Where are we going?" she asked in a low voice, for they were walking rather quickly towards the other end of the park.

"To get a cab, dearest," he said. "I have found out a registrar's in a little, quiet place just outside of London. I went to him the other day. He is a nice, sleepy old man, who won't remember our names a couple of days after he has heard and written them. I have arranged everything. It is wonderfully easy to get married, Jess, providing you can get the lady's consent. You are not really frightened, dear?" For she was trembling a little.

"No," she said, simply. "Not frightened—but, Bruce, I seem to be walking in a dream, as if it were not I, but another girl, who happens to be called by my name, who is doing this!"

They got into the cab, and Bruce told the man to drive them within a couple of streets of the registrar's office.

It was just within the London radius, but so quiet and rural a place that one could easily have mistaken it for the country. Discharging the cab, they walked to the office, and Bruce paused a moment to encourage and hearten Jess.

"There is little or nothing to do, dearest," he said. "Just answer the questions, and—there you are! Are you ready? Give me your hand a moment. Why, it is still trembling!"

She looked up at him with a smile that came and went, flickering like sunlight, over her beautiful face.

"I am quite ready, Bruce," she said, almost solemnly.

They went in, and were received by the registrar. He was, as Bruce had said, old and sleepy, and he peered with a very faint curiosity at the young couple who had come to be made one.

To him they represented just so much in the shape of fees, and no more, and the sooner he could get through the work for which he would be fee'd, the better.

All sorts and conditions of couples had come to him for years past, and he had long since ceased to feel any curiosity concerning persons whom he should probably never see or hear of again.

A servant and a clerk, rather more torpid than the registrar, acted as witnesses, and the ceremony commenced. It was as brief as it was business like, and Jess, scarcely seeing or hearing what was going on—for the dream-like feeling had increased—was suddenly startled by the registrar saying—

"Now, Mrs. Ravenhurst, if you will kindly sign this book. Your maiden name, please. It's the last time you'll write it, so you must say good-bye to it nicely."

It was a joke he never failed to make, and he and the clerk chuckled over it as if it were a sample of the choicest wit.

Jess wrote her name; Bruce wrote his; the registrar slowly—oh! how slowly—filled in the usual certificate and handed it to her.

"You keep this, madam," he said, in a business-like tone. "You can always get a copy by paying the fee; but most ladies like to keep the original," and he chuckled again. "I wish you both a long life and happiness! Thank you, sir!"

The clerk and the servant also thanked him—and with some surprise and warmth for the trip was a long one—and Jess and Bruce went outside, walked to the end of the street in silence, then stopped and looked at each other, as if they were both in dreamland.

"My wife!" he said slowly, his eyes shining, his whole air that of a man who has, all undeservedly, found himself inside Paradise.

The color flooded Jess' face, and she looked at him, and then away from him.

"My wife!" he repeated more softly. "Jess, I can scarcely believe—realise it—think of it! No one—no one—can separate us from this moment! We may be thousands of miles apart, but you will belong to me—I shall belong to you! It is that thought that will keep me up during all the weary months I shall be away from you.

"I shall say to myself, 'Jess—dear, beautiful, sweet-hearted Jess—is my wife. Mine! No man can come between us, and snatch her away from me, now.' I shall come home—to my wife! Oh, Jess! what can I say to you to show you my gratitude, my happiness? Hi, cabby!"

He hailed a hansom, and told the man to drive them out towards the country, and they sat, hand in hand, and silent, for some minutes. But presently Jess woke to the perils and risks of the situation.

"Bruce, I must go back!" she murmured.

He started.

"Yes; I had actually forgotten! I was thinking we were starting for our honeymoon!"

He grew grave, and a cloud fell over his face; but it passed. He would not sadden her by his own grief at parting. Besides, they had not parted yet.

"Yes; you must go back, worse luck! But we can snatch half-an-hour. It is early yet. Jess! there is an old-style inn on the road. We will get some tea; you must want something, dearest! We will get some tea, and try and persuade ourselves that we have not got to part—say, in half an hour."

Her hand closed over his with a convulsive little pressure. She had not forgotten the coming parting. But she smiled bravely, and drove back the threatening tears.

They came to the inn—one of those old-world hostelries whose prosperity had fled with the vanishing of the coaches which used to stop at its hospitable doors.

But, though its glory had departed with the "good old times," the landlord was still fat and comfortable, and the landlady a cheery old soul, who at once jumped to the conclusion that Bruce and Jess were a sweethearting couple, and made haste to spread a high tea. Bruce laughed as he gazed at the hot toast, the muffins, and strawberry jam, and the tin of sardines.

"It's almost as good as a regulation wedding breakfast, Jess!" he said lightly. Then he reflected that the loss of the nuptial splendor, which weighed so lightly upon him, might be felt more keenly by Jess, and he put his arm round her and drew her to him.

"Never mind, dearest! Wait till I come back, and you shall have the sweetest breakfast we can manage. Ah, Jess! do you think I don't know all you are giving up for me?"

She laid her head on his breast, and put one hand upon his lips.

"It is you who make the sacrifice, Bruce!" she whispered.

He kissed her into silence, and she had only time to slip from his arms as the landlady came in with the tea.

Gorgeous as was the fare, these two discovered that they were not hungry. Bruce made a fierce attack upon the loaf, with a great pretence of a ravenous appetite; but Jess did not attempt the impossible.

After awhile they sat by the open window, talking—there was so much to say, such fear that something all important would be forgotten.

And all the time the old fashioned grandfather's clock in the corner ticked on warningly. Jess knew that every moment was lessening this short, all too short reprieve, and gradually her voice grew slower and fainter, and then died away.

"We must go I suppose," he said, trying to speak lightly, carelessly. "We must say good-bye here, Jess."

She hid her face against his breast, and tried not to cry—indeed, he heard only one sob. There was a choking sensation in his own throat, and a suspicious moisture in his eyes; and he could only say, huskily—

"Good-bye, Jess, my darling, my wife! Remember, Jess! whatever happens, whether I succeed or fail, I shall come back to claim you—if I live!"

He was sorry that he had added this proviso, for he felt her shudder and cling to him, and a cry—the first she had uttered, a cry like a moan—escaped her lips.

"But I am not going to die, dearest!" he went on quickly. "I'm not of that sort—too tough, and 'warranted to wear.' Don't—don't cry, Jess, if—if you can help it! Look me in the eyes, and say good-bye, like a soldier's wife!"

She raised her head, and, with both her hands on his shoulders, looked at him with so sweet a solemnity that a great calm fell upon him. It was the saint in her eyes that awed this notorious sinner.

"Good-bye, Bruce—my husband!" she murmured.

They drove to the corner of the park, and walked for a few minutes together in silence. Then, with a hand clasp, and a farewell in their eyes, a "God bless you, my own!" huskily breathed by Bruce, they parted.

He stared after her long after she had disappeared from sight; then strode off, white to the lips, but with the lips set firmly. Yes; he would be more worthy of her, or die!

When Jess got home, she was going straight to her own room for a few minutes' breathing time—a few minutes in which to realize that she was Bruce's wife, Lady Ravenhurst—but the sturdy door opened, and her father called to her.

She went down the stairs again, her heart beating, her eyes feeling heavy with the guilty knowledge of what she had done; but Mr. Newton was too agitated to notice her manner.

"Jess, come in here!" he said. "Don't be frightened, dear!" For she had started at his tone and the anxiety and almost sternness of his face. "I must tell you at once. I have to start for Africa to-morrow."

"To-morrow!" echoed Jess. "Oh, father! Not—not to-morrow."

"Yes," he said, taking her hand and drawing her towards him. "I have received an important wire while you were out, and I must go at once. Keep up your heart, my dear."

But this climax was too much for Jess, and she clung to him, sobbing painfully. Then, suddenly, she realised what she was making him suffer, and forced herself to be calm.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

OF WONDROUS BIRTH.

BY W. M.

The natal day of king or queen
May swiftly from our memory fly;
The kindly rulers some have been,
They pass from mind as years flit by.

But this day and its wondrous birth,
Still brighter glows by flight of time;
Most festive dawn of all on earth
Is hailed with joy in every clime.

He never dies, holds endless sway,
So aptly may this welcome ring:
Long live the King that's born to-day,
Let Heaven and earth His praises sing.

Love-born her mission so fulfil,
To feed the hungry spirit bread.
So if we grant King Love his will
Both soul and body will be fed.

A Kjœlke Ride.

BY M. A. T.

IT was Christmas Eve, and a merry house party was assembled in a beautiful old Norwegian homestead on the Skougum mountain.

The married sons and their families always gathered at the ancestrial home to enjoy the festivities of the day. Great excitement on this occasion, therefore, prevailed at the Hval-stad station, when the parents, children, and bundles descended from the train, which had been heralded by the little engine with its snow plough. The old station master shook hands with each in turn, and packed them, rolled up in bear skin rugs, into the sledges for the long and snowy drive which lay before them.

Standing at the door of the house itself to welcome the arrivals, was the old coachman, a Swede, as all good coachmen are in Norway, and the housekeeper.

She was a severe looking personage, spare and yellow, but with as soft a heart for the family in whose service she had been for twenty years, as she was austere in appearance.

She looked upon the two unmarried daughters as her own particular young ladies, and was much grieved that she had not been asked to prepare a wedding "remember" for them, such as she had given to each of the sons when they had taken unto them wives.

"Yes," she remarked to the coachman, "it is just dreadful. There are those two young ladies still unmarried!"

"Well," he replied, "I don't see why they should be married. They have got a nice home, kind parents and everything that girls can want."

"Aye," she replied, "but a man is a man, be he no bigger than a flea, and even the ugliest 'Frue' (married lady) comes before the most beautiful 'Froken' (Miss)."

"I know that," replied the man, "but I don't think that Froken Astrid will ever marry. You see, she is not so young as she was, and now she is quite satisfied with her success as a professional painter."

"She is dreadful with her art ideas," replied the housekeeper. "To-day she is dressed in a velvet skirt and bodice that simply refuse to keep together at the waist, in spite of pins and I do believe she has even tried to fasten them with a hairpin! She makes me despair, and the only way to keep her tidy will be to get her married; but no one will marry her, I fear, although she is clever, for she not only paints but sings well."

"She has a beautiful voice, and sings our songs gloriously," replied the coachman.

"Yes, but that is another trouble. She won't sing—she scorns her mother silently when she even ventures to ask her."

"Ah! there is Froken Gunhild," exclaimed the Swede. "She is a dear young lady. She has on her ski dress, so must have been out on snow-shoes, and, why—that is Olaf Kalbenstvedt walking beside her dragging his kjœlke (Norwegian toboggan). Splendid young fellow that. What a handsome pair they make!"

"Will you come on my kjœlke, then?" the young man was asking Gunhild as they neared the door.

"Yes; but you must promise not to upset me or I will never forgive you," answered the pretty girl, who was small, and neat, and bright complexioned.

"It is just the day for 'aking,'" he said. "I will take every care of you, if you will only trust me," and Olaf gazed down lovingly at his companion.

Aking is one of the national sports of Norway. It is tobogganing, but, the toboggan being mounted on runners ten or twelve inches high, it is a very dangerous amusement; so dangerous, in fact, that the Government has several times suggested prohibiting the pastime.

Olaf, who was devoted to the sport and an adept, was a fine young fellow, tall and well knit, with that fair hair so particularly Scandinavian, which he wore after the fashion of his country, brushed straight up on end, like an angry cat's fur; but somehow it suited the square forehead and massive jaw of his race.

A pair of merry blue eyes were eagerly watching his companion as he asked:

"Are you ready, Froken Brock?"

"Yes," she replied, as she returned from the house, where she had been to fetch her furs; for although the gray ski dress was sufficiently warm for the tremendous exercise, of skilobning, it was not warm enough for sitting still on a kjœlke.

The little kjœlke and Olaf were waiting at the door, and Gunhild immediately stepped forward, and taking a seat astride in the front part of the toboggan, and tucking her reindeer fur-booted feet on the runners, laughingly said:

"I am ready, Herr Olaf; but mind you are careful, I know how foolhardy you are, sir."

"Have no fear, my kjœlke has never borne so precious a burden before, and I must show you how well it behaves," saying which he pushed the little toboggan over the snow to the slope of the hill, much in the same way as one pushes a boat off from the shore.

His steering pole, some eighteen feet long, was in his hand. As they reached the brow of the hill, Olaf bounded to his seat behind his pretty companion, and with a shriek of triumph most carefully steered the kjœlke with his pole, which acted like a rudder behind.

"It is splendid," cried the girl, as the pace during their descent became quicker and quicker, and the crisp air fanned her cheeks.

Round the bends of the road they swerved, only to increase their pace at the next corner.

It was gloriously cold, just that sunny bright cold, without wind or damp that is worth a midwinter journey to Norway to enjoy.

Some three feet of snow carpeted the land, beautiful white snow, which had fallen in crisp feather-like flakes an inch long and more, a species of snow utterly incomprehensible in England, where a dozen drops of watery stuff descends from leaden clouds, and makes muddy puddles as soon as it reaches the earth.

The sun was shining brilliantly, making the land sparkle, and the snow clad pines glisten like myriads of diamonds as its beams flitted here and there over the landscape.

"No wonder you like 'aking,'" exclaimed Gunhild. "I love it—but you know I have never been with anyone on a kjœlke before, except the brothers."

"Why not, Froken?"

"Because I have never trusted myself—you see I think so much of my precious neck!"

"Quite right too. The prettiest neck in Christiania, but you will come again with me; won't you?"

"Yes—perhaps—Oh" as they went over a hardly frozen bit of snow, "I love it!"

"Froken, will you come with me always—will you give me the right?" and the nervous tension of his face spoke more than his words.

He was in love—madly in love, and although he had not intended to speak just yet, something in the air of that Christmastide spurred him on.

She did not answer.

"Froken—Gunhild—may I call you Gunhild—will you—will you be my wife?" The handsome young fellow bent forward to catch her reply.

The blue veins throbbed in his temples, as he waited for her answer, which she had not time to give, before the steering pole, in his excitement, dropped from his hand, and the kjœlke, like a mad thing, was flying down the road at a wildly quickening speed.

Over everything it flew in its wild career, tearing on furiously to the bottom of the mountain, on, on it rushed. Like a flash of lightning the kjœlke jumped into a huge snow heap at the bend of the road.

Olaf realized the danger, but could not avert it, and both he and his passenger were precipitated on to the frozen mass.

Extricating himself with difficulty from the broken woodwork, Olaf saw the white form of Gunhild prostrate in the snow, a little stream of blood trickling from her mouth.

Good God! had he killed her, the one thing he cherished most on earth?

Tenderly he lifted the broken spars of the kjœlke from where she lay, and raising her head against his manly breast, he listened awestruck for her breathing. He heard nothing—the white face lay silent against him.

He trembled from head to foot. Was she dead?

Fool, wicked fool that he was, so to have lost command of himself at such a time when his only thoughts should have been to steer his kjœlke safely. He bent his face over hers—put his cheeks against her lips, and listened—no, she was not breathing. It was more than he could bear, and putting his face still closer, in an agony of reproach, he listened again.

Then he felt the warm breath of life.

His joy was too great, he drew her to him, he pressed passionate kisses on her face, he murmured words of love into her unheeding ears.

How long he stayed so, only the little yellowhammers on the frosen branches of the trees could say, but at last, she slowly opened her eyes, and looking up at him, smiled.

"Can you forgive me? Are you better?" he whispered.

"Olaf, is that you?" she gasped.

It was the first time she had called him Olaf, and the word seemed as balm to his disturbed soul.

"Yes, darling, it's Olaf," and he drew the shivering form a little closer. "Are you hurt, tell me, are you hurt?"

"Not much I think, only a little shaken. Perhaps I fainted. Thanks, Olaf," as he wiped the blood-stained cheek.

"Darling," he murmured, raising her gently, "you must not stay here, the cold is dangerous. Will you let me carry you to Peterson's cottage yonder?"

"I think I can walk," she said, "I feel so much better," and a little color mounted to her cheeks.

"Can you forgive me—forgive me everything?" he pleaded.

"Yes—everything."

"Will you—oh! my darling, will you be my wife?"

She lowered her little head and nestled up to him as she murmured, "Yes."

It was a moment of supreme happiness for both. Were they not in love; all the world to one another. Even the little yellowhammers felt their joy and burst forth into exultant song.

* * * * * *

That Christmas Eve, the family party assembled for middag (dinner) at three o'clock. The host had welcomed them in the usual Norwegian custom "Velcommen til Bordet," to which all had bowed as they took their seats. They had enjoyed rice, porridge, fish pudding, pork, rype, and delicious home-made cakes; and the sweet champagne had arrived.

Everyone was in the best of spirits, looking forward to the Christmas tree, and the distribution of presents to follow. The glasses were all filled by the daughters of the house to drink healths, the servants even partaking in this convivial ceremony.

"Wait a moment," said the host, "before you 'skaal' (drink the health) to absent friends, I want you to 'skaal' a young couple dining with us to-night."

Everyone looked surprised, and the old housekeeper nearly let her glass drop at the suggestion of an engagement.

"Yes," he continued. "I announce the betrothal of my daughter Gunhild and Olaf Kalbenstvedt."

"There," said the coachman to his housekeeper friend, "there, now what do you say—one of your young ladies is engaged and to a right good gentleman too."

"Well, well, I never!" and off she rushed to kiss her young lady, muttering to herself "Well I never. Who would have thought it!"

Intense was the excitement—the glasses clinked, and amid kisses, handshaking and laughter, the dinner ended that Christmas Eve, but not before the newly engaged folk were tremendously chaffed, and asked endless questions about their kjœlke ride.

Every detail was dragged from them bit by bit while the elderly gentleman drank "toddy" in the drawing-room and the ladies enjoyed Swedish punch with their apples and nuts.

Suddenly someone noticed that the elder sister Astrid was absent, and everyone naturally wondered where she was.

Just as her father put his hand on the handle of the door to go and look for her in case she were ill, for otherwise surely she would not be absent while such an important story was in progress—the door opened.

In walked Astrid, all radiant with smiles, a little more untidy than ever, followed by Dr. Boe, the family medico and honored friend.

Engagements are infectious diseases, and they had followed suit!

How the unexpected always happens.

The old housekeeper prepared her "remembers" in due course, and has never ceased to bless that Christmas Eve, neither is she tired of relating the stories of the engagements to the village gossips, who look upon her as a very great dame.

Can You Account for It.

BY T. E.

I AM an old maid, and am not the least ashamed of the circumstances. Pray, why should women not be allowed the benefit of the doubt like men, and be supposed to remain single by choice?

I can assure you it is not from want of offers that I am Miss Janet MacTavish, spinster.

I could tell—but no matter. It is not to set down a list of proposals that I have taken pen in hand, but to relate a very mysterious occurence that happened at our house last spring.

My sister Matilda and I are a well-to-do couple of maiden ladies, having no poor relatives, and a comfortable private fortune.

We keep our servants (all female), and occupy a large detached house in a fashionable part of Edinburgh, and the circle in which we move is most exclusive and genteel.

Matilda is a good deal older than I am (though we dress alike) and is somewhat of an invalid.

Our east winds are certainly trying, and last March she had a very sharp attack of bronchitis, brought on (between ourselves) by her own rash imprudence. Though I dared not say this to her face I may say it here.

She does not approve of fiction, though goodness knows what I am going to set down is not fiction, but fact; but any literary work in a gay paper cover (of course, I don't mean tracts), such as novels and magazines, is an abomination in her eyes, and "reading such like trash" she considers sinful waste of time.

So, even if this falls into her hands by an odd chance she will never read it, and I am quite safe in writing out everything that happened, as I dared not do if I thought that Mattie was coming after me, and picking holes in every sentence.

Matilda is terribly particular about grammar and orthography, and reads over all my letters before I venture to close them.

Dear me, how I have wandered away from my point! I'm sure no one will care to know that I am a little in awe of my elder—that she treats me sometimes as if I were still in my teens.

But people may like to hear of the queer thing that happened to me, and I am really and truly coming to it at last.

Matilda was ill with bronchitis—very ill. Bella (that's our sewing maid and general factotum, who has been with us twelve years this term) and I took it in turns to sit up with her at night.

It happened to be my night, and I was sitting over the fire in a half kind of doze, when Matilda woke up, and nothing would serve her but a cup of tea of all things, at two o'clock in the morning—the kitchen fire out, no hot water, and every one in the house in their beds except myself.

I had some nice beef tea in a little pan beside the hob, and I coaxed her hard to try some of that, but not a bit of it. Nothing would serve her but real tea, and I knew that once she had taken the notion in her head I might just as well do her bidding first as last.

So I opened the door and went out, thinking to take the small lamp (for, of course, all the gas was out, and turned off at the meter, as it ought to be in every decent house).

"You'll no do that!" she said, quite cross.

Matty speaks broad when she is vexed, and we had had a bit of argument about the tea.

"You'll no do that, and leave me here without the light. Just go down and make me a cup of tea as quickly as ever you can, for I know I'll be awfully the better of it."

So, there was just nothing else for it, and down I went in the pitch black darkness, not liking the job at all.

It was not that I was afraid. Not I

But the notion of having to rake-up and make the kitchen fire, and boil the kettle, was an errand that went rather against grain, especially as I'm an awful bad hand at lighting a fire.

I was thinking of this, and wondering where were the wood and matches to be found, when, just as I reached the head of the stairs, I was delighted to hear a great raking-out of cinders below in the kitchen.

Such a raking and poking, and banging of coals, and knocking about of the range I never did hear, and I said to myself—

"This is fine; it's washing morning" (we do our washing at home), "and later than I thought; and the servants are up, so it's all right," and I ran down the kitchen stairs, quite inspirited-like by the idea.

As I passed the door of the servants' room (where cook and housemaid slept) Harris — that's the housemaid — called out—

"Who's that?"

I went to the door, and said,—

"It's I—Miss Janet. I want a cup of tea for Miss MacTavish."

In a moment Harris had thrown on some clothes, and was out in the passage. She was always a quick, willing girl, and very obliging. She said it was black dark, and I could not see her.

"Never you mind, Miss Janet; I'll light the fire, and boil up the kettle in no time."

"You need not do that," said I, "for there's someone at the fire already—cook, I suppose."

"Not me, mam!" said a sleepy voice from the interior of the bedroom. "I'm in my bed."

"Then who can it be?" I asked, for the poking and raking had become still more tremendous, and the thunders of the poker was just awful.

"It must be Bella," said Harris, feeling her way to the kitchen door, and pushing it open, followed by me.

We stood for full half a minute in the dark, whilst she felt about and groped for the matches, and still the noise continued.

"Bella," I said, crossly, "what on earth—"

But at this instant the match was struck, and dimly lit up the kitchen.

I strained my eyes into the darkness, whilst Harris composedly lit a candle. I looked and looked, and looked again; but there was no one in the kitchen but ourselves.

I was just petrified, I can tell you, and I staggered against the dresser, and gasped at the now silent fireplace. The coals, and cinders, and ashes were exactly as they had gone out, not a bit disturbed; any one could see that they had never been stirred.

"In the name of goodness, Harris," I said, in a whisper, "where is the person that was poking that fire? You heard them yourself!"

"I heard a noise, sure enough, Miss Janet," she said, not a bit daunted; "and if I was a body that believed in ghosts and such like leavers I'd say it was them," putting fire-wood in the grate as she spoke.

"It's queer, certainly! Miss MacTavish will be wearying for her tea," she added. "I know well what it is to have a kind of longing for a good cup. Save us! what a cold air there is in this kitchen? I wonder where cook put the bellows!"

Seeing that Harris was taking the matter so coolly, for very shame-sake I was forced to do the like; so I did not say a word about my misgivings, nor the odd, queer thrill I had felt as we stood in the pitch darkness, and listened to the furious raking of the kitchen grate.

How icy cold the kitchen had been! Just like a vault, and with the same damp, earthy smell!

I was in a mighty hurry to get back upstairs, believe me, and did all in my power to speed the fire and the kettle, and in due time we wended our way upstairs, Harris bearing the tea in a tray, and walking last.

I left her to administer the refreshment whilst I went into Bella's room, which was close by, candle in hand.

"You are awake, I see, Bella," I remarked, putting it down as I spoke (I felt that I must unbosom myself to someone, or never close an eye that night). "Tell me, did you hear a great raking of the kitchen fire just now?"

"Yes, miss, of course! Why, it woke me! I suppose you had an occasion to go down for something, Miss Janet; but why did you not call me?"

"It was not I who woke you, Bella!" I joined, quietly. "I was on my way upstairs when I heard of that noise below, and I thought it was cook or Harris; but when I got down Harris came out of the bed-room. Cook was in bed. Maggie, you know, is up above you, and we went into the kitchen thinking it might be you or her and lit a candle; but I give you my word of honor that, although the noise was really terrible till we struck a light, when we looked about us not a soul was to be seen!"

At this Bella started up in bed, and became of a livid, chalky kind of color.

"No one, Miss Janet?" she gasped out.

"Not a soul!" I replied, solemnly.

"Then, oh!" she exclaimed, now jumping bodily out on the floor, and looking quite wild, and distracted. "Tell me, in Heaven's name, which of you—who went into the kitchen first, you or Harris?"

She was so agitated she seemed scarcely able to bring out the words, and her eyes rested upon mine with a strange, frightened look that made me fancy she had taken temporary leave of her wits.

"Harris went first!" I answered, shortly.

"Thank Heaven for that!" she returned, now collapsing on the edge of her bed. "But poor Kate Harris is a dead woman."

I stared hard at Bella—as well I might. Was she talking in her sleep? or was I dreaming?

"What do you mean, Bella Cameron?" I cried, "are you going crazy?—are you gone clean daft?"

"It was a warning," she replied, in a low and awestruck voice. "We Highlanders understand the like well. It was a warning of death. Kate Harris' hour has come!"

"If you are going to talk such wicked nonsense, Bella," I said, "I'm not going to stop to listen. Whatever you do don't let Matilda hear you going on with such foolishness. The house would not hold her—and you know that well."

"All right, Miss Janet; you heard the fire yourself, you will allow that; and you will see that the kitchen grate is never raked out for nothing. I only wish, from the bottom of my heart, that what I've told you may not come true; but, bad as it was, I'm thankful that you were not first in the kitchen!"

A few more indignant expostulations on my part and lamentations on Bella's, and then I went back to Matilda; and it being now near three o'clock, and she inclined to be drowsy, I lay down on the sofa, and got a couple of hours' sleep.

A day or two afterwards I was suddenly struck with a strange thrill of apprehension by noticing how very, very ill Kate Harris looked. I taxed her with not feeling well, and she admitted that she had not been herself, and could not say what ailed her.

She had no actual pain, but she felt weak all over, and could scarcely drag herself about the house.

"It would go off. She would not see a doctor—no, no, no! It was only just a kind of cold feeling in her bones, and a sort of notion that a hand was gripping her throat. It was all fancy; and Dr. Henderson (our doctor) would make fine game of her if he saw her by way of being a patient. She would be all right in a day or two."

Vain hope! In a day or two she was much worse. She was obliged to give in to take her bed. I sent for Dr. Henderson indeed, he called daily to see Matty—so I had only to pilot him down below to see Kate. He came out to me presently with a very grave face, and said—

"Has she any friends?" pointing towards Kate's door with his thumb.

"Friends! To be sure," I answered. "She has a sister married to a tram conductor in Wickham street."

"Send for her at once; and you had better have her removed. She can't last a week."

"Do you mean that she is going to die!" I gasped, clutching the banisters, for we were standing in the lower hall.

"I am sorry to say the case is hopeless. Nothing can save her, and the sooner she is with her own people the better."

I was, I need scarcely tell you, greatly shocked — terribly shocked — and presently, when I had recovered myself, I sent off, post haste, for Kate's sister.

I went in to see her. She, poor creature, was all curiosity to hear what the doctor had said.

"He would tell me nothing, miss," she observed, smilingly, "only felt my pusle and tried my heart with a methoscope, and my temperature with that queer little tube. I only feel a bit tired and out of breath; but you'll find I'll be all right in a day or two. I'm only sorry I'm giving all this trouble, and Bella and Mary having to do my work. However, I'll be fit to clean the plate on Saturday."

Poor soul, little did she dream that her work in this world was done!

And I, as I sat beside the bed, and looked at her always pale face, her now livid lips and hollow eyes, told myself that already I could see the hand of death on her countenance.

I was obliged to tell her sister what the doctor had said; and how she cried—and so did I—and who was to tell Kate?

We wished to keep her with us undisturbed—Matilda and I—but her people would not hear of it, and we had an ambulance from the hospital, and sent her home.

She just lived a week, and, strange to say, she had always the greatest craving for me to be with her, for me to sit beside her, read to her and hold her hand. She showed far more anxiety for my company than for that of any of her own people.

Bella alone, of all the household, expressed no astonishment when she heard the doctor's startling verdict, being in Matty's room at the time. She merely looked over at me gravely, and significantly shook her head.

The night Kate and I were with her she had lain silent for a long time, and then she said to me quite suddenly.

"Miss Janet, you'll remember the morning you came downstairs looking for Miss MacTavish's tea?" (Did I not recollect it, only too well!) "Somehow, I got a queer kind of chill then; I felt it at the time, to the very marrow of my bones. I have never been warm since. It was just this day fortnight. I remember it well, because it was washing Monday."

That night Kate Harris died. She passed away, as it were, in her sleep, with her hand in mine. As she was with me on that mysterious night so I was now with her.

Call me a superstitious old imbecile, or what you like, but I firmly believe that, had I entered that room first, it would have been Janet MacTavish, and not Kate Harris, who was lying in her coffin!

Of course Matilda knows nothing of this, nor ever will, perhaps, for she is one of you strong-minded folk. She would scout at the idea, and at me, for a daft, silly body, and explain it all away quite reasonable like. I only wish she could!

Tribute von Lucan.—A tourist just returned from Hungary was witness to the following curious scene at a village fair: A woman was kneeling on the ground near a stall, uncoiffed, with her hair falling down her back.

Then a man, with a great pair of scissors, took the waving tresses in his hand, and sheared them off close to the head, leaving only a lock at each temple.

The deed was done in a few seconds, and the effect was horrible. It seemed that an abominable assault had been committed; but this woman who had lost her hair was evidently not of the same mind, for she rose from the ground, gaily covered her bare scalp with her hat, and after a feigned struggle, received a kiss from the shearer, who declared, with an ugly grin, that the embrace was needed to make her hair grow again.

No money was paid, but the woman who was sheared was allowed to choose twelve yards of some cheap material from the stall.

Another young woman was only offered six yards for her hair, which she had carefully combed out before the bystanders, but she insisted on having seven yards. The dealer being obstinate, she put on her cap and walked away.

This practice of hair dealing in districts where life is too hard for the married woman to preserve an ornament which nature has given her when it can be exchanged for something useful, explains the ease with which the better-favored lady obtains her artificial tresses.

But what a difference between the price originally paid for them and that paid by the eventual wearer!

Calling His Holiness.—A pleasant story illustrative of the Pope's kindliness is told by a contemporary.

It seems that not long ago an English lady, a Protestant, with her little son, aged eleven, and her daughter, obtained an audience of the Pope, through the good offices of Cardinal Rampolla, the Papal Secretary of State.

The latter invited the boy to kiss the Pope's slipper.

"We don't kiss people's feet in England," said the little fellow; "but he's a nice old gentleman, and I'll kiss his hand, if he likes."

The Pope was delighted with the little fellow's answer, and paid him several compliments in Italian.

Scientific and Useful.

Astronomy.—An observatory has been successfully completed on the summit of Mont Blanc, at the height of 15,780 feet. Instead of being movable like an ordinary telescope, the telescope on Mont Blanc is fixed in the direction of the Polar Star. A movable mirror is made to reflect any object desired down the tube to the eye piece for the study of the observer.

Life Buoy.—An ingenious new life-buoy has been invented by a Swiss engineer, and tried recently at Geneva. The buoy contains an air-cell, which is automatically inflated by means of the vapor of chloride of methyl as soon as it enters the water. It is also supplied with a sea-light of the Holmes description—that is, a capsule containing phosphide of calcium, which, when wetted by the water, yields a bright, torch-like flame, lasting for three-quarters of an hour. The principle of the buoy is also applied to a life-saving dress. The buoy itself, however, has the appearance of an air pillow, and is simply bound across the chest.

Pneumatic Water Service.—The pneumatic water service system dispenses with elevated tanks, and utilizes compressed air in a closed tank as a means for keeping up the supply when the pump stops working. The tanks are of riveted steel, and are tested to 100 lbs. per square inch pressure. A partition separates the water compartment from the air compartments of the tank, and a check-valve, operated by a float, prevents the entrance of water to the air compartment. A special pump is used, which sucks a small amount of air at every stroke. It may be worked by hand or driven by any available power. The tank may be located at a distance from the pump if desired. An important advantage of the system is that the tank may be placed in a cellar or underground, and thus cool water may be drawn from the faucets in summer, which cannot be done where the ordinary elevated tank is used to store the supply. In winter also the tank is easily protected from freezing, whereas the elevated tank is a frequent source of trouble in this respect.

Farm and Garden.

Sheds.—If sheds are costly it should pay to use cornstalks for providing shelter or windbreaks by placing them against poles. Cornfodder is too valuable to use in this manner; but there are hundreds of farmers who allow fodder to be wasted when it might be used on the outside of the barnyard as windbreaks if it cannot be put to better use.

Variety.—It is difficult to secure trees that are true to the variety, and mistakes occur in the best nurseries. A reform should be made in this matter, as there is some cause not known, most probably due to nurserymen assisting one another, orders being sent to other nurseries when they cannot be filled by the one receiving the order. This difficulty is not confined to any one section, but seems to be general. There are some nurserymen who are very careful, but there are others who themselves have been deceived and unintentionally sent out trees that are not true to name of variety.

Forests.—Gerieke, the great German forestry, writes that the greatest ages to which trees in Germany are positively known to have lived are from 500 to 570 years. For instance, the pine in Bohemia and the pine in Norway and Sweden have lived to the latter age. Next comes the silver fir, which in the Bohemian forests has stood and thrived for upwards of 400 years. In Bavaria, the larch has reached the age of 275 years. Of foliage trees, the oak appears to have survived the longest. The best example is the evergreen oak at Aschoffenburg, which reached the age of 410 years. Other oaks in Germany have lived to be from 315 to 320 years old. At Aschoffenburg the red beech has lived to the age of 245 years, and at other points to the age of 225 years. Of other trees, the highest known are ash, 170 years; birch 150 to 200 years; aspen, 220 years; mountain maple, 225 years; elm, 130 years, and red alder, 145 years.

The discomforts of Influenza, the danger from Grip, and kindred disorders, can be modified and cured—perhaps altogether prevented—by a prompt resort to Dr. D. Jayne's Expectorant. For the Liver use Jayne's Painless Sanative Pills.

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The Day of the Year.

It is the pleasantly-sad task of THE SATURDAY EVENING POST to once more greet its subscribers, friends and readers with the compliments of the season. It is pleasant because it seems more than at other times to bring us face to face with them, and is in harmony with the whole tendency of nature at this glorious festival. On the other hand, it is sad for the reason that with each recurring anniversary we feel that all of us are nearer the great mystery, and that many who were with us a year ago are not here to respond at least in spirit to the salutation.

But while the wish that THE POST extends is a feeling of pleasure not altogether unalloyed with pain, it sees so much to be thankful for and rejoice in at this blessed time, that the shadow which comes of sombre thoughts is only like to that running over a field of wheat when a cloud obscures the sun. Let the most of us look back over the twelve-month behind us and while there may be dark spots in the vista, they are more than dimmed by the pervading light.

And it is the Christmas spirit which bids us to estimate these contrasts at their right value. It teaches us to make much of the bright and little of the gloom; to attune our souls to the fact that no matter how pain may seem to supervene in the affairs of life, there is a spirit of love over all that eventually adjusts everything for the best; that there is an ever-present angel of kindness, apparently sleeping perhaps, but really watchful and awaiting the proper time to come forth in all its effectiveness; that the forces of good and virtue in man are really stronger than the array of evil and that each of us is but an epitome of all. However our fellows may seem hardened and callous to gentle influences at other seasons, that this is only on the surface and does not reach the heart it is the great and glorious privilege of Christmas Day to prove.

What human creature is there in the whole Christian world to-day who does not feel the blessed influence of this festival? From the palace to the hovel, rich and poor, humble and ignorant, every class and condition are alike in the Christmas feeling. The consciousness of brotherhood is abroad, the sense of kinship, the memory that all are children of a common father and so brothers and sisters, bring us closer to each other. We feel that there is a general relationship, carrying with it obligations of kindness in thought, word and act, and we acknowledge the obligations by more or less yielding obedience to our nobler impulses.

Wrapped up in self-concern for the rest of the year we drop the cloak of conventionality, of business, of station and for the time being let our feelings, worked on by our better, but too often suppressed nature, have their way. It is now that the sun of eternal love melts the ice of coldness and indifference from about our hearts, and though with the dying of the day we again relapse into many of our old faults, the visit of the angel cannot but be a blessing. It is another case of that troubling of the waters spoken of in the Scripture that brought comfort and healing in its train.

And so we are more than glad to say Merry Christmas. In so speaking we feel our hearts beating in touch with the great heart of humanity. There is hardly a home in all this broad and heaven-favored land to-day where the same will not be breathed as a message of love, peace and good will. Even if the day may occur but once a year, and we are apt to forget its lessons and teaching so much at other seasons, we are the better for this one visit and feel that it is a foretaste of a time when the Christmas spirit will surge through the cycles of eternity.

THOSE exercises which are not common are apt to be exposed to public view; for things private are practised more safely at home. Nevertheless, thou must beware thou neglect not those which are common, being more ready for what is private. But having fully and faithfully accomplished all which thou art bound and enjoined to do, if thou hast any spare time, betake thee to thyself, as thy devotion shall desire. All cannot use one kind of spiritual exercise, but one is more useful for this person, another for that. According to the seasonableness of times also, divers exercises are fitting; some suit better with us on working days, others on holy days. In the time of temptation, we have need of some, and of others in time of peace and quietness. Some we mind when we are pensive, and others when we rejoice in the Lord.

SOME persons who appreciate their fellow-men never by word or look allow them to find it out. Whether they do not wish to puff up their self-esteem, or whether they fear to be thought too easily pleased, or whatever be the reason, words of praise or encouragement rarely fall from their lips, though inwardly they may acknowledge and honor what is meritorious and noble. They make a fatal mistake. Where one person is made vain by honest praise, a hundred are stimulated to new and higher achievements. Where one is kept humble by never being commended, a hundred are made spiritless and dejected, and their efforts flag.

How lamentable that we should go through the world so misunderstanding one another; letting slip golden opportunities for glimpses into men's better nature, which might have knit our heart to theirs for ever in a brotherhood of love, and drawn the veil of charity over faults which, in our blindness, seemed to us without a virtue to balance them. Angels turn sorrowing away from this soul-blindness of ours, and fiends laugh over the final fall of despair which our helping hand might at such moments have averted. Well for us all it is that He who is Himself without sin, more merciful than man, sees gathering tears in eyes that we deem hard and dry.

NO matter under what circumstances, every battle in life that is worth gaining is fought up-hill and against odds. Just before the battle of Ohod, a council was held by Mahomet. "Shall we retire to Medina, and let the women and children help us to fight? Our forces may be insufficient." "No," said the young men, "let us have a fair fight and an open field." On the sword of that remarkable Moslem was engraven: "Fear and want of conscience bring disgrace; forward lies honor; cowardice saves no man from his fate." A lasting impress has he left on the world's history, and yet he started out in life with a sack of barley, a hand-mill, and a pound of butter.

THE satisfactions of this life are many; but there will come a time when we have had a sufficient measure of its enjoyments, and may well depart contented with our share of the feast. I am far from regretting that this life was bestowed on me; and I have the satisfaction of thinking that I have employed it in such a manner as not to have lived in vain. In short, I consider this world as a place which nature never intended for my permanent abode; and I look on my departure from it, not as being driven from my habitation, but simply as leaving an inn.

A SNOB may be known by several characteristics. He is polite to his superiors; arrogant with those of lower station; fawns on the rich; snubs the poor, and pretends not to know his own mother, when he chances to meet the old lady in unfashionable clothes. He has plenty of brass and few brains; and is always uneasy from a suspicion that his intrinsic vulgarity may fail to be hidden by his outward gentility.

COMPASSION is an emotion of which we ought never to be ashamed. Graceful, particularly in youth, is the tear of sympathy, and the heart that melts at the tale of woe. We should not permit ease and indulgence to contract our affections, and warp us up in a selfish enjoyment; but we should accustom ourselves to think of the distress of human life, of the solitary cottage, the dying parent, and weeping orphan.

How beautifully is it ordered, that as many thousands work for one, so must every individual bring his labor to make the whole! The highest is not to despise the lowest, nor the lowest to envy the highest; each must live in all and by all. Who will not work, neither shall he eat. So God has ordered that men, being in need of each other, should learn to love each other and bear each other's burdens.

WHEN Arab commentators wrote history they gave many opinions of those who had gone before them. You will find, then, some who write "there are those who say," and then again "there are others who say." The doubts of the commentator being acknowledged, this is generally the concluding formula: "Allah alam," or "God only knows."

IF men could find the fabled fountain that is said to restore youth, and health, and beauty, with what eagerness they would rush to drink its waters! Yet with scarcely less eagerness do they rush to drink of waters that bring upon them premature old age, and disease, and loathsome ugliness.

LABOR conquers all things. Everything that we do must have a certain amount of labor expended on it, to bring it to a state of perfection. However difficult it may appear, however impossible it may seem to be, remember, if you attack it with energy, and labor with all your might, your efforts will be crowned with success.

NARROW-MINDED men who have not a thought beyond the little sphere of their own vision, recall the Hindoo saying, "The snail sees nothing but its own shell, and thinks it the grandest in the universe."

IF you are looking at a picture you try to give it the advantage of a good light. Be as courteous to your fellow creatures as you are to a picture.

EVERY period of life has its peculiar prejudices; who ever saw old age that did not applaud the past and condemn the present times?

HUMILITY is the lesson of science. It is by measuring ourselves against the unsolved mysteries of science that we learn our feebleness.

CONFIDENTIAL CORRESPONDENTS.

MARIE J.—The present style of silk hats for gentlemen came into vogue about 1830.

RITA.—It is better for the husband to be older than the wife, as a rule; but a year's difference in age is of no great consequence one way or the other.

G. P. G.—Muddy water containing albuminous matter can be cleared very effectually by adding a few drops of solution of alum, and letting it stand still for a few hours. The water so cleared is quite satisfactory for use in washing of all kinds.

ADA.—Never open your eyes in water unless to remove a substance in the eye, or to see your way when in danger of drowning. Why should you? If intended to do so, we should have been given suitable eyes, like those of fish or lobsters.

P. D. W.—You do wrong to indulge in melancholy musings. A girl of twenty should be bright and vivacious, and look hopefully to the future. Engage in some task that will occupy your leisure time, and the depression of spirits of which you complain will pass away, despite the words of the German poet whom you quote.

W. G. D.—The judge always passes sentences; but formerly, in Scotland, the public executioner repeated over the sentence of the condemned, in the judge's words and then added: "This I pronounce for doom." From this expression he acquired the name of the doomster, and was so called both by the legal profession and the community in general.

R. R. T.—You were weak, silly, and foolish, and exhibited very poor judgment in saying that you declined to discuss such a matter with your lover, so long as you did not intend to break off the engagement. Had we been in your lover's place, you would never have had an opportunity to "discuss" any question with us until you made an ample apology.

M. G. L.—"Auld Lang Syne" is of uncertain origin, there being several versions of this deservedly popular song. One of the best is by Burns; but only the second and third stanzas are by this poet, the remainder being from the pen of Ramsay. The song is of uncertain antiquity; one version is dated 1716, another is said to date from the sixteenth century.

C. B. H.—Bertha M. Clay was the pen name of an English lady whose real name was Charlotte M. Braeme, the same initials reversed. She has now been dead about ten years. The number of her long stories amount to fifty or more while her short tales and poems are innumerable. She lived a very retired life, not entering society at all, and her biography furnishes little of general interest apart from that of any home-loving woman.

W. M.—Many people suppose that the X in Xmas represents the cross, and wonder that it is not written †mas. The X, however, has nothing to do with the cross. It is the Greek letter Chi, corresponding to ch in our language, and is the initial letter in the Greek name (Christos, but we have no type in the Greek alphabet to produce it) of Christ. The two words Christ-mass were often written Xmas before Christmas became one word, and this use of the X is almost as old as Christianity itself.

VOLO.—Worry is the most mischievous mind-fiend with which we have to deal. It is not possible to meet the evil by any simple remedy. The recourse to stimulants, sleeping-draughts, and what are commonly known as "nerve-tonics" and "pick-me-ups" is a perilous expedient which may result in dire injury. Better try to grapple with the difficulty by efforts of self-control and attention to the general health. Every endeavor to discipline the mind makes patience easier. The will strengthens wonderfully by use when honestly set to the task of restoring peace and order within.

CARRIE.—Nutmeg unites, with the medicinal properties of the ordinary aromatics, considerable narcotic power. In the quantity of two or three drachms, it has been known to produce stupor and delirium; and dangerous if not fatal consequences are said to have followed its free use in India. Mace possesses properties essentially the same with those of nutmeg, and, like that medicine, has been known, when taken in excess, to produce alarming sensations. It is, however, less used as a medicine. The dose of either is from five to twenty grains.

ELLEN T.—Simnel cakes are made in Herefordshire and Shropshire during Lent, at Easter, and at Christmas. It is a custom of great antiquity, and doubtless had some religious signification from the fact that a figure of Christ or of the Virgin Mary was originally stamped upon them. Most persons know that our hot-cross buns are simply the cakes that were eaten by the Saxons in honor of the goddess Eastre, plus the mark of the cross made by the Christian clergy, who, if they could not check such Pagan practices, at least sought to render them innocuous by stamping these with a sacred symbol. The name "simnel" is generally held to be derived from the Latin simila, fine flour—possibly flour of the best quality was at first used for them. The large simnels are rather expensive, owing to the richness of their ingredients, and may cost as much as two or four dollars. They are simply raised cakes of a rich yellow color, the interior being filled with much the same materials as are used for plum-cakes. We believe they are first boiled, then brushed over with egg and baked. When ready for use, they were terribly hard.

TWO BLADES OF GRASS.

BY THE EDITOR.

Who grows two blades of grass, wherein
Of old but one was grown—
Has found a key of life, and made
Its greatest joys his own.
To that extent he builds the world,
And adds unto its store
Of good, until the total stands
Thus better than before.

So he or that which brings more bliss
Unto sad human hearts,
Has learned the secret of the best
And noblest of all arts.
If then a gift—a worthy gift—
So much true pleasure lends—
Why may not you present THE POST
This Christmas to your friends?

The Schoolmaster's Bell

BY M. R.

IT was in the summer of 1875 that I entered on the duties of schoolmaster in the small secluded village of Barcester, ten miles from the nearest railway station.

I may say that I was an only child and an orphan. My father I had never seen, as my mother was left alone before I was born, and she had died while I was still a little boy at school.

Though brought up by some relatives of hers, my education was provided for by a little money left by my mother.

Having passed the necessary examinations, I proceeded to the Battersea Training College, whence—the funds at the disposal of my guardians having become exhausted—I was expected to make my own way in the world as a schoolmaster.

Thus, in time, I found myself, as I have said, set in charge of the little scholars at Barcester.

My sojourn there enabled me to realize, perhaps after an acute and exaggerated fashion, the solitariness which sometimes accompanies the position of a student fresh from one of our training colleges and set down alone to teach the children of an isolated community of agricultural peasants. There were no companions with whom I could converse freely.

I had not expected to mix in the society of a country parish which is formed or led by the parson and the squire, though I think that undue coldness is often shown by such gentry towards one who has educational influence over their poor neighbors, of whom they often really know but little; but even these were absent.

The small church was served on Sundays by a clergyman who rode over from a grammar school some miles distant; and an old rambling half decayed house which stood close by the church bore witness to the previous existence of a squire.

The old house had been shut up for some years, and its sole occupant was a withered little man, who had formerly been some sort of retainer in the family which had long lived there.

The property had passed into the hands of a person connected with the last resident, Mr. W. Montague, by marriage. Mr. Montague had emigrated to Australia; and this old man was left in charge of the dilapidated building, while the rent of the small estate was collected by the agent.

No tenant had been found for the house itself. Indeed it was not long before I discovered that it had the character of being haunted; and I confess that in my eyes this added to its charm.

From childhood I had had an irresistible appetite for the recondite and mysterious.

In fact it was this insatiable taste which had stood in the way of my getting such a post as—I may say it without undue conceit—a certain natural ability led me to hope for.

But, instead of applying myself to the proper work of a student at a training college, I so indulged my habit of reverie and my fondness for obscure reading that I found my place at the final examination deplorably low.

Thus, after leaving college, I found myself at Barcester, and left alone to find some hitherto undiscovered way into the brains of about three score shock-headed boys and girls, while a ditcher's wife, who had formerly been the mistress of a small village school, undertook the needlework of those who were destined to stitch as well as read, and gave her matronly presence to the establishment.

She was old enough to be my mother, and, for the satisfaction of the desire for intellectual conversation, hopelessly dull and uninformed.

She had once, during early childhood, seen the sea, but had never visited London, nor traveled above a few miles on a railway.

The stock of words originally used by herself had been still further reduced to her husband's needs and must have included no more than two or three hundred nouns.

But she could sew after a fashion, and thus, as my coadjutor in the conduct of the school, fairly satisfactorily filled her post of instructress in needlework.

The peasants of the village used in their common intercourse the same words, and as few as sufficed for this matron and her mate.

The farmers, whose holdings were small added some terms of rustic command to the local vocabulary; while the keeper of the public house smoked his pipe, filled his pots, chalked his scores, mostly looked down upon his neighbors while otherwise engaged—for he was a thatcher—and kept his mouth shut.

Except beer, I could never get anything from him beyond grunts, which were accepted by his customers as oracular.

Consequently I was depressingly alone, and sank into a deeper habit of day dreaming and introspection.

As I have said, one charm of the old house which had belonged to the departed squire was the character which it had acquired of being haunted, and my chief companion came to be the old man who lived in it, like a harmless rat in the corner of a barn.

He was sincerely loyal in his respect for the Montague family, which he had served in his youth, though he had lost sight of its representative, and was an inflexible believer in the supernatural.

When winter came on, we used to sit together through long dark evenings, during which he would tell me of the sounds he had heard and the shadows he had seen about the place. They were manifold, and made importunate demands upon human credulity. And yet there was a sort of fascination in them.

It is said that, if a man believes in himself, others will believe in him. Now this old man implicitly fulfilled the first condition of the old saw. He believed in the truth of what he said, and his faith had a charm of its own.

To him the mystic shadows of the night were as real as those of the horses standing in the sunshine, and the sounds he heard as veritable as that of the scythe whetted in the hayfield.

To him the supernatural world was as real as the natural; and it was only when he found a sympathetic listener in myself that he got over the sense of contemptuous repudiation from which he occasionally suffered when he began to unfold his tales to other ears.

The clergyman who came to take the Sunday services was a disdainful unbeliever in this respect; and, as the clerk looked upon the schoolmaster as indirectly akin to a parson, he was slow at first to lay his pearls before me.

But I listened, and not only smoked in silence, but sometimes paid him the genuine compliment of letting my pipe go out while he talked. Consequently he presently trusted me.

I should have said that, the salary attached to his office being small, he was parish clerk and sexton as well as caretaker in the old house. Since he could read with sufficient fluency and write a plain hand, he was selected to fill the clerk's post when it had become vacant.

He had learned much about the church. He knew where the various vaults lay, how their openings were closed by the green sod outside, and which slabs within the building had to be taken up when another member was added to the silent congregation beneath its stone floor.

He knew the history of those whose death was marked by the latest hatchments in the chancel, and he could readily turn to all the entries in the register concerning the births, deaths and marriages in the family he had served.

It had lately dwindled down to a brother and sister, the latter of whom had died, while the former—a reputable eccentric personage—had married an Australian, and, though occasionally heard of, had not been seen for many years.

Still there was evidence of his survival, or, at least, of those who represented him, since the rents of the land belonging to the Montague family were collected and disappeared.

The old clerk pointed out to me the vault in which its later members were laid. It was situated at the west end of the church—that in the chancel having been filled long before—and lay under the middle of the space bounded by the walls of the tower, to the floor of which the ropes of the church bells descended.

One opening to the vault was in the centre of this space, while access to it might also be gained through a low iron door which was almost hidden by the grass in the churchyard outside.

There was a mystery about this vault which I could never get him to speak of freely.

He would drop hints about it, and then stop, going back to some suspended tale about the history and fortunes of the family, or a story concerning footsteps which he had heard at recurrent periods in the upper passages of the house.

It appeared, however, according to him, that some years previously, when the house held a number of happy children within its walls, its then head, before his death, had given strangely-minute directions about the bell which should be tolled after his decease.

It was not to be a "passing bell," nor to be rung, as is usual, so many hours after dissolution, but at two o'clock the next morning, on the anniversary of his death, and every year after.

The survival of the family, so the old man asserted, depended upon a strict compliance with these injunctions.

It so happened that this eccentric old testator had died on December the 29th. Now two o'clock on a winter morning meant an hour of the most profoundly dead sleep to the people of a village the latest sots of which left the public house by ten, and who all rose before six o'clock.

Thus, time bringing indifference, the last sexton had several times neglected his duty.

For all that rumor asserted that the bell had been duly tolled. On one occasion, indeed, a villager who distinctly heard it, and even noticed a light in the tower on his way past the church, had knocked at the sexton's door to summon his wife to a sudden sick bed—she was a neighborly nurse—and had been startled at seeing her husband's head put out of window. Clearly he had not been in the belfry five minutes before.

Hence had arisen fresh whispers about the mystery of that December tolling. They came to my ears; but, when I questioned my old friend about them, he only asserted that, since he had been clerk, he, at any rate, had never failed in the discharge of this undesirable duty.

He hoped that no harm had been done by any neglect on the part of his predecessor: for, though the old house had long been empty, no one could tell how greatly the fortunes of the distant representative of the family might be affected by any failure on his part to comply with a custom on which its survival, and possibly return, depended.

"Anyhow," he added—it was on Christmas Eve, which that year fell on a Sunday, that we were talking about the matter—"next Friday morning at two o'clock you will hear the bell tolled eighty times."

This was the age of the dead Montague who had left instructions to have this office performed every year on the morning after the anniversary of his death, the 29th of December.

I was curious to know whether my sexton friend observed this ghostly custom, and, having kept myself awake, on the next Friday morning at two o'clock—it was a freezing, windy, moonless night—directly after the old hall clock had sounded the hour, I distinctly counted eighty strokes of the church-bell, and then fell asleep, thinking that there was at least one man in the world who was not easily kept from the scrupulous observance of a supposed repulsive obligation, though he might have no thanks from those in whose assumed interest it was discharged.

That was several years ago. Soon afterwards I left the place, and in time became the master of a large Board-school in London; and I am now writing this in the reading-room of the British Museum at the end of a Christmas holiday.

I have been tempted to set down what I said on paper, because during my short vacation I have visited the old spot with a friend who is clerk in a solicitor's office, and to whom I had told the story of the old sexton.

"Let us run down," my friend had said, "and have a look at the place. We can put up at the 'Plough'; and, if the man is still alive, we shall find whether anything has resulted from his conscientiousness."

My friend was rather fond of long words, and prided himself on his ingenuity in unravelling mysteries, legal or other. So we went.

Generally the re-visiting of a quiet country nook after years in a thronging city full of change and progress suggests the thought that there are some places in the world which are unaffected by time.

However, when we arrived at Barcester, we found some exceptions to the rule of permanence. The old clerk was still alive, and in office; but he had been shunted from his desk into an obscure corner, whence his irrepressible "Amen" occasionally mingled with the young voices of a rustic surpliced choir.

The Vicar—there was a resident clergyman now—lived in a newly-erected starling parsonage; and my old school had been replaced by another building, where a fresh-faced certificated couple taught the little peasant idea how to shoot.

The blacksmith's forge still held its ground, sending forth a cheery clinking and shafts of light as the bellows whitened the fire, and shoes were being hammered for another generation of horses' feet.

But the village shop displayed a glaring picture of an immense emigrant ship; and an advertisement of a well-known condiment promised an edge to the rustic appetite.

A railway station, moreover—without the recording of which in Bradshaw we might never have made our journey—proclaimed that Barcester had joined itself to the great world.

Porters in dark corduroy insisted upon calling out its name with a phonetic conscientiousness which obscured its long-known sound and offended old friends who had always known it as "Barster."

A smart station master sat in a box ringing electric bells, or walked about superintending the shunting of goods trains that stopped to pick up the corn which depressed farmers still continued to sell. Barcester had become a local junction, and was conspicuously changed.

But the greatest change of all was to be seen in the old Hall. The largest ingenuity of the nineteenth century restorer was only too noticeable.

To be sure it was well that the paths should be freshly graveled and the lawn relaid with softer grass; but the offence, which appeared in the color of the paint around the windows and upon the door, was made more acute by the presence of a footman in powder and an over fed pug dog, which snarled when he paused at the gate in melancholy contemplation of the restoration which had been effected.

The tenant of the Hall was a representative of the latest newness. He had come in an electric lighted ocean going ship from one of the last built cities of Australia, had made himself a member of the newest London club, and brought down the last shiny and softly seated productions of Long Acre in the shape of barouches and dog carts, one of which he was then driving from the station, back to back with a smart arm-crossed groom wearing a wholly unauthorized cockade on his hat.

He himself wore the latest overcoat from Conduit street, with a collar and prodigious cuffs of costly fur and was altogether an insistent example of the moneyed colonist.

But he claimed the inheritance of the old Hall, and the agent to the property was constrained to admit his demands.

The documents which he brought with him proved that he had succeeded to the possessions of the last representative of the Montague family, which had lived at Barcester for generations.

The surviving brother, who had married an Australian, had disappeared from sight, though he still continued to have the proceeds of the estate transmitted to him.

Then had come the news of his death, followed by that of his wife; and, as no children had been born to them, her brother had now made his appearance armed with testamentary evidence of his succession to the possessions of the family.

He had none of the Montague blood in his veins—that was an admitted fact. The old race was allowed by the legal agent to have died out, and the rights of this new claimant were not to be disputed.

His neighbors and the people of the village did not like him.

The old sexton especially, though he could adduce no reasons for his incredulity, persisted in resisting the claims of this gentleman, for, since he had come into possession, had not the eighty strokes of the bell been still sounded from the belfry, and was not this an irresistible indication that the old family had not really died out?

Why, this confident interloper himself had heard it shortly after his arrival the previous year. Had he not inquired what it meant?

And, now that the 29th of December was

immediately at hand, had he not, to the sexton's own knowledge, taken steps to ensure that the doors of the church should be locked that night so that the bell should at last be silent when the hour came for its voice to be heard?

It was now the twenty-eighth day of the month. How the old man had got the information did not appear, but he had ascertained that Mr. Shepherd—that was the Australian's name—had borrowed the church keys of the Vicar that afternoon for the purpose, he said, of showing the interior of the building to a friend who had arrived the day before, and had not returned them.

With these in his possession he felt secure about his ability to break the spell which, he was well aware, hindered that due recognition of his rights which the villagers secretly and obstinately refused to acknowledge.

Were the tower to be silent at two o'clock in the morning of the twenty-ninth, he would be able to feel comfortably certain that his position as the legitimate Squire would be allowed.

While however the bell continued to be rung, the stubborn local tradition would survive that the old stock was not extinct, whatever satisfactory proofs he might be able to lay—as he had done—before those who were best able to judge of his claims.

Nevertheless he was not easy in his mind about the matter, and had thus determined not merely to lock the doors of the church that night, but secretly to lock himself up within it and see for himself that there was no tampering with the bell-ropes.

He determined to slip out of the Hall when everything was still and the household had gone to rest, and, armed with a dark lantern, shut himself up securely inside the building.

Then he would keep watch—if necessary, with a bull's eye lantern—upon the floor below the tower, into which the ropes descended, and which covered the vault of the family whose possessions he had duly inherited. It was an undignified proceeding, to be sure, but no one would know.

In this he was wrong. We knew that some precautions were to be taken by him, and had ourselves determined to wait in the churchyard to see what would happen.

The old sexton, who was a ferret for secret investigations, told us that Mr. Shepherd had retained the keys thoughtlessly entrusted to him for a little while by the Vicar, and suspected that the new Squire would not be content with the locking of the doors.

He would be sure not to go to bed, but would await the result of his precautions, and possibly take measures to see with his own eyes that they were effective.

The night came on. No snow had fallen, but the sky was black with clouds and the ground still hard with frost.

Shortly after twelve, my friend and I, who had seen the old sexton in our room at the "Plough," and had been impressed by his evident anxiety about the situation, betook ourselves to the churchyard, and, after sheltering ourselves in a contiguous tool-house where he kept the implements of his gruesome business, waited to see what would come to pass.

The clock struck one, but no sound was to be heard; no one was to be seen. The half-hour sounded, and still there was no sign. Three-quarters chimed. All was silent.

Then at last we heard the cautious click of the gate, and the half-grown moon, shining for a moment through a cleft in the black clouds above, showed us a figure stealthily moving towards the chancel door.

There it stopped, and we could distinctly—it was a still night—hear the sound which marks the insertion of a key. Then the man, whoever he was, disappeared within the church, shutting the door behind him. But he left the key in the lock.

At first we did not notice this, and tried to look through the windows into the interior of the church. They were mostly too high. My friend however, on passing the door as we groped our way round the walls, felt the key. We both stopped, and very cautiously let ourselves in.

We heard nothing, but we crept silently towards the west end, when a gleam of light from the partial opening of a lantern showed us a man consulting his watch, and, on looking at him, we recognised the face of the person whom we had seen driving up to the Hall in a dog cart.

It was the Squire himself, come to make sure that no one had entered the belfry under the tower.

The light was little more than a flash, which, after a consultation of his watch, the Squire threw rapidly round the space in which the bell-ropes hung. Then he closed the lantern.

He was evidently satisfied no one was there, and there was no screen or projection behind which any one could be hidden.

He closed the lantern, and we could only just discern the outline of his figure as he stood in the empty church. The floor of the bell-rope recess we could not distinguish. Then all became dark and still again.

What was that? Only the gurgle of the old clock before striking the hour of two. But the hum of the last stroke had not died away before a strange brushing rustling sound was heard, as of cordage sharply drawn through a hole, and a creaking overhead as of a pulley. It was the sudden tightening of one of the ropes.

We held our breath. The bell began to toll.

I will not say that we were startled—that is not exactly the word. As for myself, I confess to a queer feeling which made me realise in a moment what people, who have never felt it, talk of as the "hair standing on end."

But that which followed was worse. I have said that the Squire had brought a dark lantern with him, and had used it for a moment to satisfy himself that no one was present. In his alarm at hearing the bell he dropped his hidden light, which opened by the jar of its fall and lit up the floor.

Yes—the rope was being held and pulled by a hand which rose up from below—i. e., from the vault beneath. The uncovered lamp shone brightly upon the floor, while those weird fingers gripped the rope and pulled it with ghostly strength.

I am not ashamed to confess that, though we stood "rooted to the spot"—another realisation of the conventional—for a few moments, we soon made our way out of the church as fast as we could, and hastened back to our inn without stopping to count the strokes of the bell, which seemed to fill the night air as we hurried along without saying a word.

Arrived at the "Plough," and safe in our little room, where a light had been left burning, we looked at each other.

"Horrible!" said my friend—his face was perfectly white. "I wish we had never gone!"

"So do I," I returned. "What on earth can it be?"

Then we paused, and all the old clerk's stories about mysterious shadows which he said he had seen and footsteps he had heard filled my mind with a new feeling of unwelcome credulity. The Montague vault, securely flagged and tiled over, lay immediately beneath the floor of the tower. Who could have tolled the bell?

All was silent now. There was not even a rustling of the branches outside our window—for the night was now as still as it was black—when we both distinctly heard a step coming along the road which led from the churchyard.

It stopped outside the inner door; and then, as we listened, it sounded clearer and clearer as it drew near to our room, and was followed by a tap on the door.

We looked at each other in silence. Another tap, and then the handle turned—we had made no response to the summons—and the old sexton himself walked in.

"I thought you didn't hear me, gentlemen, or might have gone to bed; but, seeing a light under the door, I took the liberty of coming in to know if you had heard the bell."

Yes—we had. And then somehow we told him where we had been and what we had seen.

He did not seem to be the least disconcerted or surprised.

"Yes," he said—"the bell was tolled, as I knew it would be. Indeed," he coolly added, "I ought to know, for I tolled it myself."

"Nonsense!" I broke in somewhat sharply. "You were not there, but we were; and it was not you, but—a hand."

"Exactly, gentlemen," was the unexpected reply; "and it was my own."

Seeing our perturbed condition, he went on—

"I don't like to talk of it"—we agreed with him there—"but perhaps you may remember that there is an iron door into the vault outside in the churchyard. Well, I had kept the key of that since the last burial. No one knew. And so I went in to-night and loosened one of the floor tiles I had marked from below, and pushed my hand through and got a hold of the rope."

Gradually my heart seemed to resume its regular functions as we listened to the material commonplace dissipation of the mystery which had bewildered us.

"You old ghoul!" I said. "Why could you not have told us?"

"No," he grinned. "I wasn't a going to tell nobody—not even you; but I thought I wouldn't mind coming to ask if you had heard the bell." Then he paused for a moment, and added, "I should dearly like to know what he made out of it. Perhaps, gentlemen, you wouldn't mind going back with me to see?"

There was no reason why we should not return with him, since the ghost of the tower had been laid: and reviving curiosity, assisted by a welcome glass of whisky and water, began to take the place of disquietude. So we set off, and soon reached the church.

The broken lantern was evidently still burning, for the west window of the tower was plainly traceable in the darkness as we approached it. We entered by the chancel door, and, groping our way to the dimly-lit tower floor, saw the squire lying flat and motionless.

What was to be done? Obviously the only course was to carry him to the Hall, arouse the household, and then send for the doctor.

I will not dwell on the sleepy consternation which followed, passing into alarm, with the subsequent ringing of bells, lighting of candles, saddling of a horse, and our ineffectual attempts to arouse the scared man out of the swoon into which he had fallen.

The doctor came, the day dawned, the rustic ears of the village began to open, and tongues were gradually loosed. The bar of the "Plough" was presently filled: the gig of the nearest "interviewer" with his note-book was to be seen in the yard while he made up his hurried—afterwards amplified—"copy" for the receptive "Press."

"On Friday last the usually somnolent and unimpressionable temperament of the long-secluded community of Barcester was subjected to a most remarkably exceptional disturbance, and agitation consequent on an unexpected incident, which agitated so profoundly——"

But I will not copy the three columns which filled half a page of the nearest provincial newspapers on their next issue, and, more or less clipped, found their way to the eyes of curiosity-loving readers far beyond the county, and made the story of the midnight bell and the terrified squire widely known.

But, having been behind the scenes myself, I have here set down the circumstances while they are fresh in my mind as I sit in one of the comfortable chairs with which the reading-room of the British Museum is furnished. My Christmas holiday is nearly over. The board-school of which I am master will reassemble the day after to-morrow.

I have divers preliminary matters to attend to; and thus I must somewhat abruptly end my narrative by saying that my friend and I returned to town, having left Barcester still in agitation, and the squire slowly recovering from the fit into which he was—naturally enough—thrown by what he saw and heard.

Postscript By My Friend.

My part in this narrative may be easily written; but, though it lacks the supernatural vein which has been conspicuous in what has already been set down, and is a dry statement of facts, it may not be counted as an uninteresting sequel to that which Mr. Newton—that is the schoolmaster's name—has written.

He has already said that I am a clerk in the office of a large firm of solicitors, and our business lies in the real, not ghostly region of life. Shortly after our return from Barcester he asked me to call for him at the reading-room of the British Museum, that we might take one of our Saturday afternoon walks together and spend the evening in my lodgings.

Arriving at the Museum, I found that he had drafted a full statement of what had occurred; and, on reading it through, it struck me that the editor of some magazine might be disposed to publish the record of our strange experiences at Barcester.

I was the more tempted to do so as the writer had given fulness to the story by introducing some reminiscences of his own life. After a little hesitation, he seemed disposed to adopt my suggestion, but said—

"At any rate, if it does appear in print, I do not wish to see my full name at the end of a tale which has so many local allusions."

Thus, one evening, I found my friend sitting in his room with a clean copy before him of a paper which he had called "The Schoolmaster's Bell, by J. E. N.

"By-the-way," I said, "talking of names, do you mind my asking you how it is that I find a name erased in one of the books which you have shown me as having belonged to your mother?"

I had seen this volume several times, for he set much store by it. Mine was a somewhat intrusive, if not an impertinent, question, but then I lived and worked in an atmosphere of investigation, and for the life of me could not help making the inquiry I did.

"Well," he replied, "I confess that I cannot tell you. I myself have been somewhat puzzled at what you have observed. The book was certainly my mother's. I can just remember her giving it to me.

"It had her Christian name on the fly-leaf, 'Mary,' and then some word was carefully crossed out and 'Newton' written after it. I must allow," my friend said, "that I have tried several times to decipher it, but the word is so blotted that I have failed in the attempt. I have imagined, though, that some strange wave of memory had unconsciously swept over her, and that she had written and then erased her maiden name."

"What was that, if I may ask?" was my reply.

He blushed, and said—

"Well, to speak the truth, I really cannot tell you. I recollect her once making the remark that my father's Christian name was 'William'—some mention of 'William and Mary' having probably suggested it—but I cannot say what her maiden name was."

I was sorry that I had put this painful question, but I asked:—

"Would you mind lending me the book for a few days? I shall be sure to take care of it."

"Not in the least," he replied. "There it is. You can carry it home to-night if you like."

I did so. And now comes my sequel to his tale which I would not allow him to alter or recast, preferring rather to add in the shape of a postscript what I had to say.

What I had to relate was this. On carefully examining the nearly erased word with a magnifying glass, I could see that it was unmistakably "Montague." There could be no doubt of it.

"This is a curious coincidence," I said to myself. "The name, however, is not a very uncommon one. Still here it is. She must have been a 'Miss Montague.'"

The next time I saw my friend, a few days later, he was in the midst of a school inspection.

"I must not talk to you now," he said; "but it is hard I can't get free, for this is my birthday."

"When was that first observed?" I asked.

"Oh," he replied, "curiously enough my mother used to tell me that I made my appearance exactly one year after her marriage! I am 32 years old to-day, having been born on October 17, 1851."

"Where?" I asked.

This he could not tell me. But anyhow the date of his mother's marriage was thus fixed for October 17, 1850, twelve months before his birth. But where? I examined the book again, and perceived that it had been published in Birmingham that same year, 1850.

It might have been newly bought there. It was worth trying to find out. So I advertised in a Birmingham newspaper for the register of the marriage of William Newton and Mary Montague on October 17, 1850.

About a week later I received the following reply from a clergyman in that town—

"Sir—I have referred to our register, and, on the day you mention, William Montague, not Newton, was married to Mary Newton, not Montague. Though the names are transferred, I write to tell you. And I do not think the transference is the result of carelessness, for the then vicar of my church, who was much interested in incidental parish details, has made a footnote to this effect. These parties were married by license. He is described as 'gentleman' and she as 'governess,' both being of full age. Would you like a copy of the entry?

"Yours faithfully,

"G. BLANK, Vicar."

Of course I wrote for one instantly, and, thinking that my friend had possibly been baptised in the same city, I advertised there for the register of the baptism of "J. E., son of William and Mary Montague."

In answer I received that of "J. E. Newton Montague, son of William and Mary

Montague, born October 17, 1851." The baptism took place in the same church as the marriage, and the same vicar had made another note—

"The mother of this child has been deserted by her husband, who, she believes, has gone to some English colony. But she has taken no steps to find him, having some money and educational work in Birmingham. She is known however at the school where she teaches as 'Mrs. Newton.'"

Here, then, was an unravelling of the tangle. Having heard nothing of her husband, and being indignant at his treatment of her, she had resumed her maiden name, and caused her son to be known as "John Edward" only. For the like reason too, the erased word in her book being her married name, she had substituted "Newton" for it when she gave it to her little son.

Before long the unworthy husband was proved to be really the son and heir of the last Montague who had resided at Barcester Hall. The old sexton therefore had tolled the bell to some purpose.

The family had not become extinct. It was represented by my friend Newton, now proved to be a Montague. His father, a worthless scion of his race, had won the affections of a pretty schoolmistress, and had married her without disclosing his place of residence.

Shortly afterwards he had deserted her, not however without having left behind him a sum of money, which, as it turned out, had been expended in the education of her child.

But he himself had disappeared, having, in fact, gone to Australia, leaving no hint behind him at Barcester that he had ever been married. His wife, as I have said, being left alone, had resumed her maiden name, and died still retaining it.

I have only to add that, the right of my friend to enter on his inheritance having been made easier by the death of the interloping Australian—who was a brother of Mr. W. Montague's second wife, whom he married bigamously in New South Wales presently returning again to the home of his forefathers—and I am now going to pay him a visit, when we shall stay, not at the "Plough," but at Barcester Hall.

RUNNING A THEATRE.

To use the words of a well-known Philadelphia theatre manager, "I know the public thinks that theatre is simply another name for United States Mint. It counts or approximates the number of people in the house, multiplies it by dollars and cents, and credits the proprietor of the show with $3,720—all profit, and every evening. What a bonanza this theatre business is, and yet we hear of $50,000—yes, $100,000—being lost on a certain play.

"Why is it? The public forgets that to stage and costume a show, for instance, like 'The Wizard of the Nile,' or 'El Capitan,' takes a small fortune; that many of its leading characters are high priced artists, and that a long list of incidentals comes in that managers alone have to take cognizance of."

The average cost of running a first class theatre in Philadelphia and this applies to first-class theatres everywhere, amounts to nearly $3 000 each week.

The following is taken from the books of one of the leading houses in the city: Rent, $450; orchestra, $250; newspaper advertising, $200; light and heat, $250; attaches, $300; bill posting, $100; printing, $25; license, $10; tickets, $7; extra advertising, $150. Total, $1,742

Against this the theatre receives about $3 000 a year for programme privileges, which will reduce the expense $60 a week. Rent is the largest item, and it is not so high here as in New York, Chicago, or Boston

The Empire Theatre in New York commands a rental of $41,000; Fifth Avenue, $35 000; Casino, $85,000 In Chicago the Opera House rents for $38 000 In Boston Eugene Tompkins pays $25,000 a year for the smallest first-class theatre in that city.

There is a scarcity of high-class attractions as compared with the number of theatres bidding for the best patronage and for financial success; the best must be secured at almost any price. The best pays every time.

Not long ago when a theatre manager made arrangements with a certain company to play in his house, part of the contract demanded was a guarantee that his minimum share of the receipts should be not less than $2,000 per week. This protected him in case the company played to a poor house.

Nowadays any manager of established reputation or possessing a play that has demonstrated its worth in other cities can secure all the open time he wants in Philadelphia playhouses upon a basis of equal division of gross receipts.

The expense of carrying a large organization about the country is very heavy. The following table of items is copied from a regular weekly statement of the business of "In Gay New York" during its first week in Chicago:

Printing, $250; extra advertising, $355; railway fares, $282 80; salaries, $1,295 56; carpenter work, $15 20; properties, $11 30; supernumeraries, $9; business manager's expenses, $3 55; extra calcium man, $12; electric supplies, $13.50; costume account, $9 03; express, etc., $10 90; treasurer's expenses, $8 02; royalties, $795.48; Eaves Costume Company, $8; telegrams, $1.75; extra costume, $35; music, $24 42; transfer, scenery and baggage, $75. Total, $3,914 01

The whole amount charged up to music on the week in question was repaid out of the sale of piano scores and songs. The gross receipts of the week were $9,258 75, of which the company received 55 per cent.

An item of expenditure not charged in this statement is the insurance bill, which amounts to $75 a month, and protects the management from loss of scenery, properties, etc., through railway accident or fire.

There is a considerable variety in the manner of drawing contracts between traveling managers and managers of theatres. In most instances a fixed percentage division of the gross receipts is decided upon.

For illustration, a big company like that playing "In Gay New York" will receive in St. Louis, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and similar cities 70 per cent.; in Detroit and Buffalo 75 per cent., and Philadelphia 65 per cent.

In Boston, if it plays in the Hollis Street Theatre, the division will be arranged upon a sliding scale. The company will receive 60 per cent. if the gross receipts do not reach $8,000 on the week. If that sum is exceeded the company's share will be 65 per cent.

The minor people in traveling organizations do not have a particularly easy time of it in making both ends meet.

The average salary of a chorus girl on the road is $18 a week. Her board will cost from $12 to $15, and her laundry bill, car fares, etc., will dispose of about $2 more.

This, it will be seen, leaves a very narrow margin out of which to purchase clothing and other necessaries.

Actors are not paid while they are rehearsing or when traveling upon long journeys. In some cases this arrangement is a distinct hardship.

Last season, for a production in New York, the company rehearsed for eleven weeks without pay. The play was a failure, and the company were paid two weeks' salary. Thus they were obliged to work for three months to receive a fortnight's pay.

There is yet another disadvantage about stage employment as compared with that in other fields. A shop girl will earn her wages, whatever they may be, week in and week out, the year around. An actress will consider herself fortunate if she is employed forty weeks in the year.

In that time she must save enough money out of her income to carry her over the remaining twelve weeks. So, all in all, life in the theatre is not quite as rosy as it has sometimes been painted.

IN COLD WEATHER.—In cold countries, upon the approach of winter, the fur of the animals begins to change in color. The black-coated creature begins to turn dust-color and gray, finally the color fades out, and the animal becomes pure white.

This is nature's provision for their protection, as, were they to retain their dark color, it would be extremely easy to see and capture them on the snow-covered surface.

The Arctic hare is an interesting example of this change. In summer, it is on the upper side black, with light brown mixed; when cold weather approaches, the fur fades out and becomes snowy white, except on the tips of the ears, which retain the dark color.

These little animals are wonderfully hardy and prolific, and expeditions have found them of great value as a food supply in time of necessity.

There is also a much larger hare, known as the polar hare. This animal has a somewhat fluffy coat, and it takes a very sharp eye to detect it when running over a field of light snow.

There is also an Arctic fox that changes color in the same way. It is very small, and a most beautiful creature. In summer its fur is a delicate slate gray; when the snow comes the hair becomes wonderfully thick and long, especially on the tail and the feet. To bring the summer and winter coats of this animal together, it would seem impossible that they came from the same creature.

These foxes are very sly, and unusually intelligent. They are most accomplished thieves, appearing to steal for the fun of it, as they carry away articles that could by no possibility be of any use to them.

The ermine is another of the coat-changing creatures. In summer its fur is of a rich mahogany brown, but in winter it acquires that beautiful white with which we are so familiar.

TO MAKE HOME HAPPY.—Learn to govern yourselves and be gentle and patient.

Guard your tempers, especially in seasons of ill health, irritation and trouble, and soften them by a sense of your own shortcomings and errors.

Remember that, valuable as is the gift of speech, silence is often more valuable.

Do not expect too much from others, but remember that all have an evil nature, whose development we must expect, and that we should forbear and forgive, as we often desire forbearance and forgiveness ourselves.

Never retort with a sharp or angry word. It is the second word that makes the quarrel.

Beware of the first disagreement.

Learn to speak in a gentle tone of voice.

Learn to say kind and pleasant things whenever opportunity offers.

Study the character of each, and sympathize with all in their troubles, however small.

Do not neglect little things if they can affect the comfort of others in the smallest degree.

Avoid moods and pets and fits of sullenness.

Learn to deny yourself and prefer others.

Beware of meddlers and tale bearers.

Never charge a bad motive if a good one is conceivable.

Be gentle and firm with children.

Do not allow your children to be away from home at night without knowing where they are.

Do not allow them to go where they please on the Sabbath.

Do not furnish them with much spending money.

CHRISTMAS AND THE CHILDREN.—Christmas is very full of meaning to the little people. Of its deeper significance—the Divine love, the unutterable tenderness, the hope for the world—they think little enough at first.

But, from the moment they know one day from another, it has a blessed meaning for them; for it means human love and care and thoughtful recollection of little wishes.

And it is worth while to make children happy, because their happiness can be so complete. It is rare indeed, after our early childhood, that we drink any cup of unmingled joy.

In all our pleasures blend the memories of past pains, the sad foreshadowing of future griefs. But childhood is short of memory and long of hope. To-day's delight is unchilled by any cold breath from yesterday's remembered sadness, or to-morrow's anticipated pain.

Let us, then, make our small people thoroughly glad while we may; and let us make other small people, not our own, glad also. That Christmas is most worthily kept which confers most happiness on the greatest number.

It is a poor celebration of His birthday who came to bring hope and peace to all the world, if we confine our benefactions to the narrow limits of our own household.

Let some table where but for us no Christmas turkey would appear be plentifully set—let some children's hands that would otherwise be empty hold dolls and candies of our providing. If Christmas means peace on earth and good will towards men, let our peace be from the heart, and our good will active.

MANY ideas grow better when transplanted into another mind than in the one where they sprang up. That which was a weed in one intelligence becomes a flower in another, and a flower again dwindles to a mere weed by the same change.

At Home and Abroad.

A Kansas City firm that makes canned soups of various sorts was surprised to receive from Rhode Island the other day an inquiry as to the terms at which it would sell "wishbones" in thousand lots. This request has revealed to the company a new source of income, and one not wholly important. Hitherto the skeletons of the numerous fowls it uses have been ground into fertilizers, but now there promises to be a lucrative demand for "wishbones" to be used for various decorative and sentimental purposes.

The surviving intimates of Abraham Lincoln before he became President are now so few that the death of one attracts general attention. Henry Asbury, of Chicago, who died last week at the age of 86, was a Quincy lawyer in the old ante-bellum days, and his special claim to fame consists in the fact that he framed the celebrated "four questions" which Lincoln shot at Douglass in the joint debate at Freeport, in 1858. Many political friends of Lincoln opposed the use of the questions, telling him that they would lose him the Senatorship. "Gentlemen," replied Lincoln, "I am killing larger game. If Douglass answers, he can never be President, and the battle of 1860 is worth a hundred of this." And so it proved.

A few years ago two men were convicted of horse stealing in the District Court of Choteau county, Mon. They deserved a sentence of ten years' imprisonment, but Judge Du Bose let them off with three years. The worst man of the two, supposing that the sentence once pronounced was past revision, addressed the Court: "I just want to say," he told Judge Du Bose, "that when I get out you will be the first man I'll come here to kill." "Oh, well," said the Judge, "in that case I'll make it ten years. Then you won't trouble me so soon." Having said this, he turned to the other man. "Is there anything you would like to say?" he asked. "Not a blessed word," answered the prisoner.

One of the most interesting buildings in a country full of interest is the great Buddhist Cathedral in Japan. It is built in a purely Oriental style, and has only been recently finished, the work having been commenced eighteen years ago. The wood-carving is said to be the finest in Japan, and as the cost of the structure from first to last has been considerably over three million pounds, its size and beauty can well be imagined, since labor is particularly cheap in the land of the chrysanthemum. In order to provide against fire, a number of powerful fountains have been constructed both inside and outside, which can be made to play on all parts of the building at the same time. As a rule, one huge ornamental fountain is playing every day in one of the many courts, sending a jet of water into the air one hundred and fifty-seven feet in height. This is said to be the largest artificial fountain in existence.

A very curious point has been submitted to the Derbyshire Football Association for decision. It is as to whether artificial limbs are to be permitted in the play. It seems that the Buxton Football Club had several members of its team severely injured in consequence of a member of the Matlock eleven having played with an artificial arm. It was reported that in Derbyshire alone there are a number of football players who, owing to the loss of an arm, use artificial limbs. They are described as "regular terrors" on the football field, since when once they get "on" to the ball they swing their dummy arms around with such force as to either fracture skulls or cause concussion of the brain. It has now been determined by the association that artificial limbs are henceforth to be barred in all football games.

Deafness Cannot be Cured

by local applications, as they cannot reach the diseased portion of the ear. There is only one way to cure Deafness, and that is by constitutional remedies. Deafness is caused by an inflamed condition of the mucous lining of the Eustachian Tube. When this tube gets inflamed you have a rumbling sound or imperfect hearing, and when it is entirely closed Deafness is the result, and unless the inflammation can be taken out and this tube restored to its normal condition, hearing will be destroyed forever; nine cases out of ten are caused by catarrh, which is nothing but an inflamed condition of the mucous surfaces.

We will give One Hundred Dollars for any case of Deafness (caused by catarrh) that cannot be cured by Hall's Catarrh Cure. Send for circulars, free.

F. J. CHENEY & CO., Toledo, O.
Sold by Druggists, 75c.

Our Young Folks.

"OLD BOGEY"

BY G. L. B.

IT was a story not told around the Christmas fire and was none the worse for being different from others. I think, said the narrator, I will begin my story by telling you that I am not so young as I used to be.

My feathers are beginning to fall out, and my eyes are dimmed with age. Indeed, I am afraid I shall not last out this winter.

When Jack Frost comes and makes the ground hard, and turns the water into ice, it will be very difficult to find enough to eat; and this year, too, I shall no longer have an Old Bogey to feed me with crumbs. I daresay you are wondering who Old Bogey is? Well, that is what I am going to tell you.

The first time I saw him was a very long time ago. I was a smart little robin then, with a beautiful red breast and two lovely black eyes, and my feathers were soft and downy.

It was a cold winter's day, and the city square, where my father and mother lived, looked dingier and dirtier than ever.

The leaves had fallen from the trees, and as I nestled against the branches, the wind came whistling through them, making me feel very cold and hungry.

All of a sudden, however, I heard a sound coming up from the street below me, which seemed to carry me away from the dingy square, and I seemed to be flying over golden cornfields, listening to the songs of the birds.

I peeped down beneath the branches to see where the sweet sound was coming from—and that was the first time I saw Old Bogey.

An old man was standing under the tree in which I perched, and the beautiful notes were coming from a little violin which he held in his hand.

He was a very ugly old man, and if he had not been playing so sweetly I should have been frightened of him. His face was very brown, as if it had been burnt by the sun, and he had a big hooked nose, and long bushy eyebrows.

Round his neck he wore a bright red scarf, and when he took off his broad-brimmed hat for a moment, a mass of black shaggy hair was blown across his face.

But I forgot that he was ugly when I listened to his playing, and when he stopped I felt so grateful for his music that I sang a little song of thanks. The old man looked up into the tree and smiled.

"Sweet! sweet!" he cried out.

Then he raised his violin and played a little trill that sounded like one of my own songs.

"Tweet, tweet, twee e-eet!"

I answered him back, and we had a little conversation, and the passers-by stopped to listen to us.

After that the old man came every day and played under my tree. We soon became great friends, and while he was playing I used to fly down and rest upon his shoulder.

Then, when he had finished playing, he would feed me with crumbs, and talk to me in a language that sounded like music, but which the passers-by called "Italian."

One day while he was playing under my tree, a troop of noisy boys came by and laughed and jeered at him. The old man became very angry, and ran after them and shook his fist at them; but they ran away laughing, and shouted out, "Old Bogey! Old Bogey!"

That was how I knew his name. This often used to happen, and sometimes the boys threw stones at him. Then he would put his violin under his coat and walk away, turning now and again to shake his fist at them.

One day, while I was perched in a branch of my tree, waiting for Old Bogey to come, I heard a peculiar sound which I thought at first might be the tuning of his violin.

I flew down with a bright thrill to welcome him, but instead of Old Bogey, I saw a little child, sitting under my tree and sobbing so that it made me sad to hear her.

It was a summer's day, and the sun shone brightly down and played among the golden locks which clustered round her little face.

I hopped closer and asked her why she was crying, but she did not understand me. Then I flew up into the tree and sang my brightest song, but I could not cheer her up.

Presently, Old Bogey came along tuning his violin and calling "Sweet! sweet!" as he approached my tree. But when he saw the little girl he stopped and uttered an exclamation of surprise. He knelt down on the ground beside her and stroked her golden hair.

"Vy do you cry, my child?" he said, in broken English.

The little girl hid her face in her hands and cried louder than before.

"Go away!" she screamed.

"Vere do you come from, my leetle dear?" said Old Bogey, trying to take her hands away from her face.

"Go away!" sobbed the little girl again, "I'se frightened!"

"Vy are you frightened, leetle girl?" said Old Bogey, smiling; "I no hurt you."

"You'se ugly, very ugly—I'se frightened!" cried the child, sobbing more bitterly than before.

Old Bogey walked up and down in front of the little girl, shaking his head and muttering to himself. I flew upon his shoulder and kissed his face with my beak.

Then the old man took some crumbs from his pocket and fed me with them. Presently the little girl stopped crying, and took her hands away from her face and watched us.

When Old Bogey saw this, he scattered some crumbs beside her, and when I hopped close and picked them up, the little girl laughed and clapped her hands so that she frightened me away. But I quickly came back again, and we soon became fast friends, and Old Bogey was telling the little girl how he had made my acquaintance.

"And now, leetle girl," said Old Bogey, when I had finished my meal, "tell me vere you come from."

"I ran away from nurse," said the little girl. "I'se lost myself."

Then she began to cry again, but Old Bogey took her in his arms, and this time she was no longer frightened of him, but kissed the old man's face; and presently she laid her little golden head upon his shoulder and fell asleep.

The next time I saw Old Bogey he was leading the little girl by the hand. He seemed very happy, and laughed gaily when the little girl fed me with crumbs; and then he began to play such merry tunes that I had to sing and keep him company.

Presently he sat down underneath my tree and began stroking the golden hair of the little girl. I flew upon his shoulder and listened to what he was saying.

"Do you love Old Bogey?" he said.

"Yes, I love him," said the little girl, laying her little face against his.

"How much?" said Old Bogey.

"As big—as big—as the whole world!" said the little girl, stretching out her arms and putting them round the old man's neck.

"Vy do you love an ugly old Bogey?" said the old man.

The little girl thought for a moment before she answered; then she said—

"I love him 'coz he find me when I'se lost, and 'coz he plays me pretty tunes and teaches me to dance."

The old man laughed, and sang softly to himself a little Italian song.

The little girl looked at him for a moment with thoughtful eyes, then she said wonderingly—

"Why does Old Bogey love me?"

Old Bogey laid down his violin and pressed the little girl's head against his breast.

"I love her because I like to feel her kisses on my cheek—because I like to stroke her golden hair. Do you know what would happen to Old Bogey if his little fairy left him?"

The little girl shook her head.

"His heart would break in two!"

"Me will never leave Old Bogey," said the little girl.

They often used to come and sit beneath my tree, and I loved to listen to Old Bogey's merry tunes and to watch the little girl dancing to them.

One day a little crowd gathered in the square and stood watching the old man and his child.

Her little feet kept time to the music, and as she danced, the sun sparkled in her golden locks and the summer breeze blew her dress into pretty folds, so that she looked like a little fairy.

A carriage which was driving through the square stopped, so that the lady who was in it might watch the performance; but suddenly she started up with a cry of joy, and jumping out of the carriage, ran quickly towards the little girl.

Old Bogey stopped playing and the little girl stopped dancing—then, with a loud cry of "Mother!" she jumped into the lady's arms.

"My precious darling!" cried the lady, clasping the little girl in her arms. "I have found you at last!"

Then she carried the little girl towards the carriage and put her in it.

"Where are we going, mother?" asked the little girl, looking rather frightened.

"Home, darling," said the lady.

"But I must stay with Old Bogey, mother."

"No dear, we must go home now," said the lady.

"My home is with Old Bogey now, mother," said the little girl, beginning to cry. "He loves me, and if I leave him his heart will break into."

But the coachman whipped up the horses, and the carriage rolled out of the square, and drove far away from Old Bogey, far away from the old tree, and far away from me in its branches.

And Old Bogey stood on the curb looking after them until they were long out of sight, and until the crowd had cleared away and darkness had descended upon the earth.

Then he crept slowly away with his head upon his breast and a deep moan which sounded like the sighing of the wind.

Early next morning he came again. I flew upon his shoulder and asked him to play to me, but he shook his head sadly.

"I cannot play no more," he said, "until my leetle girl comes back."

Then he sat down under the old tree and watched and waited.

The church clock chimed the quarters, and the hours crept on, and Old Bogey sat there still.

But the little girl did not come, and the old man sighed, and sighed again, so that I knew his heart would break in two.

But at last, as the sun was sinking in the west, a carriage drove rapidly into the square and stopped before the old tree. A gentleman and a little girl jumped out, and I heard a cry of "Old Bogey! Old Bogey!"

Then the little girl sprang into the old man's arms, and as he kissed her and stroked her golden hair, he said softly—

"I knew my leetle girl would come."

Then the gentleman came up and clasped Old Bogey's hand.

"How can I thank you," he said, "for taking care of my little runaway? Money cannot repay so great a service, but if you will come and live with us, my little daughter and I will try and pay you back with love."

"Yes," cried the little girl, pulling the old man towards the carriage. "Come and live with us, and teach me to play and dance."

Old Bogey got into the carriage, and tears of joy filled his eyes. As they drove away, I flew up to the highest branch of my tree and watched them till they were out of sight, and I tried to sing "Good-bye" softly to them, but my heart was very sad, for Old Bogey had gone, and I should never see him again.

ALMS-GIVING.—It is now the time when the season is so cold that hearts ought to be warm to make up for it. It is only the indolent, however, who cannot content themselves but with indiscriminate giving.

Indeed there seems to be only three classes of human creatures to whom we really have a right to give anything but work—the very young, helpless through the feebleness of youth; the very old, helpless through the feebleness of age; and the really sick, helpless through the feebleness of disease.

To all persons outside these three classes it seems both an injury and an impertinence to give alms. We should do that much more difficult thing—interest ourselves to find them employment.

To put one person in the way of helping himself does more real good than temporarily helping a dozen.

But, if we are too indolent or too hurried to do the best thing, we can hardly excuse ourselves from doing the second best.

We can scarcely answer it to our consciences to live easy and prosperous lives, careless of the needs of the great multitude of the really poor.

Let us all do what we can; first and best, let us put as many as possible in the way of helping themselves; and then, if suffering faces us, let us remember the words, "Thou shalt not turn thy face away from any poor man.

THE WORLD'S HAPPENINGS.

There are 5338 libraries in the United States.

Don't go with the crowd simply because it is a crowd.

There are at least 10,000,000 nerve fibres in the human body.

There are said to be 9,000 cells in a square foot of honeycomb.

Colored physicians of South Carolina have formed a State organization.

Switzerland is the only civilized country in the world which grants no patents for inventions.

A bill has been introduced in the Georgia Legislature making it a misdemeanor to play football.

Monkeys frequently get horribly seasick just like "other people," when taken on a sea voyage.

The ear of the bird is a small orifice, which is generally covered very closely with a little tuft of feathers.

Physiologists say that of all people in middle life at least one third have one ear in some degree affected by deafness.

It has been estimated that on an average, four persons are killed and forty injured every week in the streets of London.

Seven miles an hour is the camel's limit, nor can it maintain this rate over two hours. Its usual speed is five miles an hour.

By a new law in Paris, each owner of a bicycle is required to have a plate containing his name and address soldered on his wheel.

On the death of a person in Madrid it is the general custom to close for nine days one of the outer doors of that person's late residence.

An analysis of 2000 accident policies, on which benefits were paid, showed that only seventy six cases were injured in bicycle accidents.

Bounty has been paid on more than 40,000 sparrows in Gratiot county, Mich., during the past year, and yet the birds seem to be as numerous as ever.

A new watch is said to have a phonograph cylinder hidden away inside, and at the hour and each quarter of an hour a tiny voice may be heard giving the exact time.

The greatest waves known are said to be those off the Cape of Good Hope, where, under the influence of a north-west gale, they will sometimes reach a height of forty feet.

The advantages of advertising were recently illustrated in London. A man advertised for the return of a lost cat. In less than a week 321 of them were brought to his house.

When a Russian family moves from one house to another it is customary to take all the fire from the hearth of the old domicile and carry it in a closed pot to the new residence.

A man with a mathematical turn finds that the slowest breeders of all known animals—a pair of elephants—would become the progenitors of 19,000,000 elephants in 750 years, if death did not interfere.

There are ten newspaper editors in the House of Commons, six printers, four tailors, three stationers, two butchers, three hotel-keepers, six tenant farmers, one coal merchant and one pub proprietor.

It is said that the quivering of the aspen's leaves is due to the fact of the leaf-stalks being flat on the sides, and so thin about the middle that the slightest breath of wind sets all the leaves wagging horizontally.

The Lagong Bridge, built over an arm of the China Sea, is five miles long, with 300 arches of stone, 70 feet high and 70 feet broad, each pillar supporting a marble lion 21 feet in length. The cost of the bridge is unknown.

The French language contains 13 per cent. of useless letters. There are 6,800 journals published in the language, which print 108,000,000,000 letters annually, so that 14,040,000,000 letters are useless, because they have ceased to be used in the French language as it is spoken.

In spite of the odium which is supposed to be attached to the office of hangman in Europe, there is a great rush for the position of High Executioner of Prussia, now that Herr Reindell, the present incumbent, is about to retire. The post pays £87 "a head" and traveling expenses.

The late Archbishop of Canterbury had a favorite dog named Watch. Once, as he lay on the mat at the open door of the chapel, the Archbishop read impressively this sentence of the Scripture lesson: "What I say unto you I say unto you all—watch." The dog sprang up, came forward and lay before the reading desk at his master's feet. One hearer, at least, heeded the lesson and responded.

It is said that in one of the Canary Islands there is a tree which in evening comes on quite frequently rains down a copious shower of water from its tufted foliage. This forms a pool at the base of the tree, which the natives use as drinking water, it being absolutely pure and fresh. Perhaps our water filtration problem might be easily and quickly solved by planting one of these trees in every back yard.

THE SMALLEST.

The smallest deed may tell the truly brave;
The smallest skill may serve a life to save;
The smallest draught the thirsty may relieve;
The slightest shock may make a heart to grieve.
Naught is so small that it may not contain
The rose of pleasure or the thorn of pain.

ABOUT THE DAY.

There is perhaps nothing more curious than the date chosen for the commemoration of the Nativity; for the learned are certain about nothing so much concerning the birth of our Saviour as that it could not have occurred on the 25th of December; and the most ingenious of the solutions which have been given to the problem as to why that date was chosen is, that it is about the time of one of the great changes of the seasons—just as Midsummer Day has been counted a festival so midwinter should be consecrated, but in a higher form, especially as about this time of year pagan festivals of the greatest importance were held, and the early fathers of the Church were wise enough in their generation to avail themselves of the ancient pagan festivals and clothe them with attributes which raised their character and adapted them to celebrations of the great anniversaries of religion.

Thus arose, no doubt, the custom which has existed from time immemorial of Christmas decoration, of which so much is made even at the present day both in churches and private houses, in which evergreens, such as holly and mistletoe, and laurel and box form the principal ingredients. The holly is almost entirely confined to England, and has, perhaps, been chosen mainly on account of its brightness and the cheerful color of its berries; but some have thought that its prickly leaves in some way typified the crown of thorns, though this is rather fanciful than probable.

The mistletoe originally, no doubt, took its sacred character from the veneration that was paid to the oak and its parasite, the mistletoe, by the Druids, though all kinds of mistletoe are used now, and the rites which are attached to it are by no means of a solemn character—quite the reverse. The laurel has always been looked upon as the emblem of honor, and box has been used as perhaps giving, by its dark hue, a contrast to the others.

The Christmas tree, though known in England as early as the time of Henry VIII., did not come into general use until the last generation, when it was re-introduced from Germany, and now forms one of the greatest delights to children when lighted up with its ornaments, and having sweetmeats, oranges, apples, and other prizes hanging in tempting clusters from its branches.

In the middle ages the baron of beef, consisting of two sirloins, was one of the chief attractions of the festive board, and the legend of the Knighthood of the Loin by Charles II., however apocryphal as a matter of fact, has sufficient authenticity to make one not too uneasy in accepting the tradition.

Plum-pudding was not known till towards the latter part of the seventeenth century, though something very much like it had been a favorite dish for a lengthened period.

In addition to these staple dishes the Boar's Head is a very ancient Christmas repast, and at Queen's College, Oxford, is or was, until very recently, brought to table with great pomp and ceremony, being accompanied by the singing of an ancient Latin carol announcing its arrival. Game pies were always a favorite addition, and the peacock was brought into requisition as being not only rare but toothsome, as well as ornamental. Stripped of his skin with the feathers on, he was converted by culinary art into a succulent pie which was covered with the skin and feathers, the tail being spread out and the beak gilded.

Mince, or more properly shred pies, have long been associated with Christmas, and were originally much larger than at present. Turkeys, since their introduction during the first half of the sixteenth century, geese, ducks, and even swans have also formed relishable additions to Christmas fare; brawn may also be mentioned, though not at present in request, and of course poultry in the shape of "good fat capons."

The drinking customs of Christmas originated with our Anglo-Saxon forefathers, with whom wass hael, or "wassail" answered to the present "good health." The story which attributes the origin of the wassail bowl to the fair Lady Rowena, the daughter of Prince Vortigern, who by her winning ways took captive her proud conqueror is graceful enough to be true, and has, perhaps, some foundation in fact; but the custom was long anterior. Some of these wassail bowls or loving cups curiously wrought in the middle ages are still extant, and when brought forward on grand occasions at the banquets of city companies or colleges at the old universities are the theme of general admiration for their beauty and splendor.

Among the special drinks in use at Christmas, "frumety," and "egg-hot," or "egg-flip," are most in vogue, and are too well known to need description here; both are of Saxon origin.

The modern Christmas parties, which are generally timed while the little folks are home for their holidays, are a relic of the great public festivities which used to be held by the sovereigns and the great nobles, and of the great charity festivals instituted by the church.

The blessing of the yule logs was an important ceremony, and after the solemn services had been performed the holidays, which lasted till Twelve-night, were devoted to music and merry-making. A ruler of the Revels, called the Lord of Misrule, in England, in Scotland the Abbot of Unreason, was appointed, and the maddest freaks his imagination suggested were carried out; in some counties the mummers or maskers came in unbidden, and went through their fantastic performances; in others there were special dances, and in all the great centres masques and entertainments by mimics and clowns, the forerunners of the modern pantomime, were given, on which much money was lavishly spent, and to which the poorer class were often invited. Everywhere it was a time of profusion and, to some extent, of prodigality.

Christmas Boxes, which now mean small donations of money, were originally boxes in which money was saved towards the expenses of Christmas, and they were—as many references in the earlier poets testify—broken open on the day after Christmas—hence the modern custom.

Grains of Gold.

Where there is no self-culture, there is no knowledge of true life.

If a man has no friends, it generally means that he deserves none.

Justice carries a two-edged sword; but mercy purposely goes unarmed.

There are people who claim to be praying for the poor, who never do anything else for them.

There must be a constant dying to a lower life, if we would know what it means to enjoy a higher one.

When love gives, at Christmas and always, it enriches itself, but what covetousness keeps, it takes from itself.

It will probably be some time before the people who blow trumpets solely to advertise themselves, are all dead.

We often pray for faith to remove mountains, when what we need is light to see that they should remain right where they are.

The real owner of a thing is the one who gets the most good out of it, not the one who may have the name of being its possessor.

Femininities.

Even the gossip isn't "in it" with the scorcher for running people down.

It's easy enough to run into debt; but it's often necessary to "crawl" to get out of it.

It is surprising how much longer a shirt may be worn after marriage without "breaking" the bosom.

Many a man who is too tired to bring up a scuttle of coal will play poker with the boys for six hours straight.

Creditor: Can you let me have my little bill? Debtor: Certainly, but don't destroy it. I may want to pay something on it some time in the future."

Millions of men in India live, marry and rear apparently happy children upon an income which, even when the wife works, is rarely above 50 cents a week.

A country editor remarks that no man can afford to make a fool of himself. Our contemporary forgets, however, that some men are utterly reckless of expense.

A gentleman asked an American the other day what he thought of the English climate. He laughed, and said, "Why, you haven't got a climate; you've only got samples!"

The Duke and Duchess of Fife are at the present moment among the richest of the younger members of the Queen's family. The Duke is credited with a private income of $400,000 a year.

The girl who never screams when she sees a snake isn't a safe girl to marry. With her calm, cool, collected, unexcitable disposition she would hit where she aimed with the rolling-pin every time.

A fashionable lady, in boasting of her new palatial residence, said the windows were all of stained glass. "That's too bad!" cried her mother. "But won't soap and turpentine take the stains out?"

In Denmark and in Norway the posts of shorthand-writers at the respective parliaments of those countries are chiefly occupied by women, it having been found that women, as a rule, succeed far better than men in this form of reporting.

Mr. John Muldoon, of Bridgeport, Conn., declined to act as pallbearer at the funeral of a neighbor's wife because the body was too heavy, and thereby precipitated a fight with the chief mourner, who was badly worsted in the mercenary affray.

The supposed grave of Eve is visited by over 40,000 pilgrims in each year. It is to be seen at Jeddah, in a cemetery outside the city walls. The tomb is fifty cubits long and twelve wide. The Arabs entertain a belief that Eve was the tallest woman that ever lived.

In Arizona a woman who teaches in the public schools is paid $79 50 per month. In Pennsylvania the average pay of women teachers is $38 28 per month. Doubtless this disparity is a result of the working of the law of supply and demand. In Arizona, where women are fewer, they are better appreciated.

A bicycle race with a panther was the exciting experience of an English lady in Singapore one evening lately. When riding slowly homeward along a road outside of the town the cyclist found that she was being quietly stalked by a huge black panther. She had the presence of mind to start off at full speed, and soon distanced her pursuer.

A new form of sea insurance has recently been inaugurated. Japanese pug dogs have lately become fashionable in Paris, and considerable numbers are imported from time to time. Merchants engaged in the trade now insure the animals against sea risk, and as they are delicate and require careful attention, the chances have to be carefully calculated.

In a dreamy rapture he kissed her golden tresses.

"The future," he exclaimed joyously, "with its castles in the air!"

She turned with sudden earnestness.

"Reginald," she said decisively, "don't deceive yourself. I tell you, once for all, I shan't live above the second story under any circumstances!"

"George," she said in a low voice, "would you make a great sacrifice for my happiness." "Certainly," he replied. "Would you quit smoking for my sake?" "Quit smoking for your sake!" he repeated. Then, after a silence, he exclaimed hoarsely. "I can refuse you nothing. I will quit smoking for your sake. Hereafter when I smoke it will be for my own sake."

There was one American institution to which J. M. Barrie, the novelist, took a decided dislike when visiting this country, and that was the American parlor. He thus expressed his opinion regarding it: "The idea of having the largest and best-furnished room in the house reserved for infrequent callers, instead of allowing the children of the household to enjoy it, was never a pleasant one to me. It was once told by a bright boy that he seldom was allowed to enter the parlor of his home unless it was during a 'funeral ceremony or something like that.' This may have described the situation too strongly, but it was much nearer to the truth than otherwise."

Masculinities.

Bluebeard's trade evidently was that of a belle-hanger.

Okefenokee, in Georgia, boasts a 13-year-old girl who weighs 175 pounds.

Every person under twenty-one needs nine hours' rest out of the twenty four, says a physician.

A girl, speaking of a certain youth, says that the only thing about him that isn't fresh are his tears.

"I don't quite see why you call Mr. Biggs lantern-jawed." "Why, because his face lights up so when he talks."

A man, who had a good telescope, looked at his third cousin through it, which brought him as near as the first cousin.

A professional maxim for lawyers: Whatever you do, do it with your might. Many a member of the profession has made a fortune by working with a will.

The Queen Regent of Spain, who will soon have a motor carriage, will be the first European sovereign to use it. It will be known as an "electric victoria."

Prince Dimitri Khilkoy, a Russian nobleman, has followed the advice of Count Tolstoi, and divided his estates among the peasants, reserving but seven acres for his own cultivation.

A new method of stopping hiccough is said to have been accidentally discovered in a French hospital. It consists in thrusting the tongue out of the mouth and holding it thus for a short time.

Scene—French post office. "You wish to register this enclosure, madam. Are the papers valuable?" "Oh, dear, no, monsieur! There is nothing in the envelope except my marriage certificate."

A gentleman from the south of Texas boasted that the papers of his village pay so much attention to society matters, "that a leading citizen cannot go home sober late at night without having the fact published as an interesting item."

Stranger, in Kentucky: I understand that they lynched a man here yesterday. What had he done? Colonel Pepper: Done, suh? What had he done? Why, suh, he come here to open a branch agency for a mineral water company! That's what he done!

The most remarkable John in Paris has just died. He was six feet six inches in height, and was of herculean strength. It is said that "he could easily lift his cab from the ground with one arm." The cause of his death was his heavy drinking. Over sixteen quarts of wine was his daily average.

"I'm not very proud of your progress in school," remarked a mother to her son, who was struggling along in the third standard. "There's Charley Shay is always ahead of you, and he isn't near as old." "I know it," he sobbed. "Teacher said he learned all there was to learn in the room, and that left me without anything to learn."

Every now and then Brooklyn brings forward a novelty. This time it is in the shape of George Washington, who claims to be a descendant of the brother of "The Father of His Country." The second George is very proud of his name, and spends a large part of his time in imitating the signature of his illustrious ancestor. He has merged his own birthday with that of his namesake, and celebrates both in befitting style.

Professor: Now you have seen that these experiments can be more successfully performed with perfectly pure water than with any other. Who can tell me how to obtain the purest water known?

Student: Boil it.

Professor: Right. Now, how is water boiled?

Student: By putting it on the fire.

Professor: Right again. Now, how is the fire made?

Student, hesitating: Er, professor, I'm not a married man.

"What a methodical fellow you are, Brown!" said Fitkins, who had stepped into Brown's office during the latter's absence.

"Why, what do you mean?" asked Brown, who had just entered.

"Mean?" echoed Fitkins; "to think that you should lock all your drawers up when you are only going out for five minutes! 'Tisn't likely that anyone would meddle with your papers."

"Of course not," replied Brown; "but how did you find out that the drawers were locked?"

No logician of the male sex living can split a finer hair in argument than a plain, innocent, unsophisticated woman. Her simple distinctions are inscrutable; but can't she stretch the meaning of the language and make words embrace everything she wants to?

"My husband always gives me my money once a week, you know," said one little blonde woman, with an expression of guilelessness on her face that would deceive a professional mind-reader; "but he used sometimes to get short next day and take it back."

"Well, you could put it in your bureau."

"He'd rummage everywhere till he found it; but I got the best of him, and now he never can find it."

"Where do you put it?"

"I put it in his coat pocket when he comes home and take it out before he goes out."

Latest Fashion Phases.

Even Christmas and its attendant festivities do not altogether dim interest in the styles, so that the latest doings in the world of fashion may not be inopportune.

The royal standard of France's recent guest, the Czar of all the Russias, has caused the sudden fashionable popularity in Paris of yellow and black. The ensign has a yellow ground, upon which black eagles appear, and accordingly for theatre, reception and evening gowns yellow and black are the accepted combinations. Velvet, broche silk and satin of the royal color are veiled or trimmed with black lace or with black tulle embroidered with topaz jewels and beads.

Bodices are mentioned apart from gowns because, although it is now correct to have the corsage and skirt en suit in point of color, they are often of different material. A skirt of yellow and white broche silk, for instance, will have a bodice of yellow satin covered or trimmed with white lace. This preserves the harmony of tone throughout, yet affords variety also. Again, a corsage of blue gauze over white satin will accompany a skirt of blue and white Louis Quinze broche silk. A skirt of white silk with black velvet stripes is worn along with a bodice of puffed white mousseline de soie trimmed with narrow black velvet ribbon. This fashion of combining different materials is a fortunate one for the woman of modest means for if she dresses according to the demands of her complexion her entire wardrobe will include only a few colors, and she can put two gowns together to make a new one. A fair woman's costumes will, for instance, show a preponderance of blue, and she can take the best parts of two blue garments to compose another.

The goods most employed for ball gowns this winter are certainly moire silks. There are very many varieties, the moire antique being most generally preferred. There are both plain and changeable effects of color. Broche and striped silks have frequently the watermark running through the ground. Sometimes the moire surface is varied by embroidered dots or satin stripes or even by flower designs printed on the warp.

Besides moires a great many wide striped silks are worn, the stripes being of light colors on a white ground, the former having a moire or satin finish and the latter being covered with a flower pattern matching the stripes or even embroidered. Satin duchesse and liberty satins are also seen, and ottoman silk has reappeared with very heavy raised ribs and often in changeable colors of light shades.

For diaphanous gowns a great deal of mousseline de soie is employed; also printed gauzes and gauzes having a satin stripe. The mousseline de soie has an open embroidery design, either large or small, and sometimes is worked with a light pattern in chenille. Silk and metallic embroidery combined is seen on some of the thin evening fabrics.

For trimming, ruches or little flounces of plain gauze, bordered with chenille, are favored, as are likewise lace, ribbons and flowers in profusion. Beaded effects are also seen, applied on plastrons, boleros and collarettes of velvet of a deeper tone than the rest of the costume.

Fur, here, there and everywhere, is one of the chief features in this winter's fashions. For the wealthy woman what an opportunity there now is to revel in rich fabrics, costly poitry and invaluable lace. Rich women were not "in it," so to speak, in the reign of severe simplicity some ten years ago, when four yards of fabric were enough for a gown and almost no trimming was employed. Riches could assert themselves only through the medium of diamond necklets, imported hats—plain nevertheless—and shoes and gloves made to order. Of course costly lingerie is not counted in, for that, like Shakespeare, is "not for time, but for all ages," and is not in evidence. Now, on the contrary, all available decoration is employed—lace, passementerie, embroidery, jewel work, chiffon, mousseline de soie, flowers, spangled and metallic effects, velvet and ribbons. Some of the new evening bodices are completely covered with trimming of various kinds, and plain finish is at a discount, save for very stout women, who cannot carry a superfluous inch of goods.

To return to furs, with which we started, one is inclined to think that the fever for variety reaches too high a point when it accepts long, silky goat's hair dyed a brilliant green. This trimming in white, gray or black is very pretty, though rather juvenile looking, but in fancy colors it is altogether too suggestive of the children's sets of muff and tippet served on a card and sold at 60 cents at holiday time. Yet one of the most fashionable importing houses exhibits in cold blood an elaborate evening cape of great cost, which is bordered all around with a deep fall of this hideous green travesty of the innocent goat's coat.

Collarettes and similar adornments of gauze and mousseline de soie find a place in the quietest wardrobes and please the tastes of even those young girls and women who consider inconspicuousness to be the chief virtue of the toilet.

Chemisettes, plastrons and vests of gauze made full and varied with insertion, narrow velvet and yellow lace are as acceptable as ever. Some of these—indeed many—come all ready to wear and are very useful to brighten up a costume for gay wear. The convenient fashion of the bolero combined with that of the adjustable vest allows a great variety of effects to be obtained with moderate means. For the theatre any sort of a silk skirt may complete the costume, since it does not show. For the street, of course, it is different. There not only is one exposed to the broad and unflattering glare of daylight, but the whole attire is obvious, and cloth or other wool goods are preferred. There are worsted materials having a surface covered with long fibres in mixtures of red and blue, beige and red or beige and brown or streaked with various bright tones on a somber ground, which are fashionable and very effective.

Braidings, cordings, brandebourgs and similar ornaments in black are very well liked on colored goods and are, of course, always effective. There are military effects very simple practically but pleasing on good figures. Buttons are of great value and are made the most of in all cases. They may be of the simplest variety or very expensive—as costly, in fact as so many jewels—but even the least in price may be employed effectively.

Odds and Ends.

SOMETHING ABOUT HOLIDAY AND OTHER MATTERS.

Christmas Pudding.—Mix three cupfuls of flour, one cupful of sweet milk, one cupful of treacle, one cupful of raisins, three tablespoonfuls of finely chopped salt pork, one egg, half a teaspoonful of cinnamon, the same of nutmeg, and a pinch of cloves; add, lastly, two teaspoonfuls of baking powder; beat thoroughly together, pour into a pudding dish, and steam three hours.

Sultana Cake.—Take one pound of butter, 12 eggs, one pound of sugar, one teaspoonful of baking powder, one pound of sultanas; beat butter and sugar together and the yolks of the eggs, and then the flour, then the raisins and baking powder; beat the white up, and stir them in last; the yolks are dropped in out of the shell, and beaten each as it goes in; the whites are put in a basin and beaten up; bake till ready; this is a very large cake, the half is enough for a house oven.

Roast Goose.—Chop up some parboiled onions; mix these with chopped or powdered sage leaves, and with pepper and salt in great moderation. You may add bread crumbs if liked; with this stuff the goose. Expose it to a gentle heat at first, and when hot through, brown it by bringing it closer to the fire. It should be dredged with flour, and continually basted while roasting. Make a brown gravy with fried onions, browned flour, good stock broth (made from the giblets), pepper and salt, and red wine, or catsup.

Mince Meat.—Mix well together one pound of raisins, stoned and chopped fine; one pound of currents, well washed; one pound of finely chopped beef suet; two pounds and a half of apples, peeled, cored and chopped; a half pound of lean beef without skin or fat, boiled and chopped; two nutmegs grated, and two teaspoonfuls of allspice; a half pound of candied peel, chopped. Put them into an earthen jar with a close-fitting cover, and pour a bottle of brandy over them; stir from time to time. It is best when made a fortnight or three weeks before it is wanted.

Another Way.—Two pounds of raisins, three pounds of dried currants, one and a half pounds of good lean beef, three pounds of beef suet, two pounds of moist sugar, two ounces of citron, two ounces of candied lemon peel, two ounces of candied orange peel, one grated nutmeg, one quart of sweet apples, the grated rind of two lemons, the juice of one, half a pint of the best French brandy. Stone the raisins, and cut them once or twice across; wash, dry, and pick the currants; boil the beef till tender, mince it very fine; skin, string and chop the suet; slice the citron and candied peel; pare, core, and mince the apples, and when all the ingredients are ready, stir them with a wooden paddle in a wooden vessel, till thoroughly mixed; add the brandy, and pack all closely in jars, covered air-tight, till used.

Chutney.—Two pounds of apples, one ounce of chillies, one ounce of ground ginger, one pound of sugar, one ounce of salt, a quarter of a pound of mustard-seed, a little garlic, two ounces of shalots, a quarter of a pound of tamarinds, one and a half pints of vinegar, three-quarters of a pound of raisins, stoned and chopped. Peel and chop the apples, and boil them to a pulp in the vinegar; turn out to cool. Cut the chillies up very finely, also the garlic and shalots. When the apples are cold, add all the other ingredients, and put it in bottles, and place them near the fire for several days, then cork.

Roast Turkey.—Truss as for a fowl, except that the leg-shanks are always cut off. Roast it quite plain. Take care to place a piece of buttered paper over the breast, baste it well at first with butter, and then with its own gravy, and when nearly done, which may be known by seeing them drawing towards the fire, it must be dredged with flour and again basted. Serve on a dish with gravy garnished with sausages or forcemeat balls. Bread sauce is eaten with it.

Very Good Plum Pudding.—Well wash one pound of currants, and dry them in a cloth; chop very fine one pound of beef suet, to which add gradually two tablespoonfuls of flour; put the suet in a large pan, and grate upon it the crumb of a stale one pound loaf of bread; add the currants, and mix well together; stone one pound of raisins, and put them into a pan; add half a pound of sultanas well washed and dried in a cloth, also a quarter of a pound of candied orange and lemon peel, and one ounce of sweet almonds blanched and chopped; mix half an ounce of pudding spice, with one ounce of powdered sugar, and a teaspoonful of salt; mix all well together as each article is added; then stir in eight eggs, well beaten, yolks and whites separately, and one glass of brandy; stir the pudding well for half an hour, let it stand some time, then put it into basins, and boil six hours in plenty of water. Serve with powdered sugar sifted over, and with wine, brandy, or plain sweet sauce, poured over them, or in a boat.

Vegetable Soup.—Pass through a sieve all the vegetables used to make vegetable stock; melt a piece of butter in a saucepan, add a little flour to it, mix it well, then add the vegetable pulp. Stir well, and moisten with as much of the stock as may be necessary. Let the soup boil; stir into it, off the fire, the yolks of two eggs, beaten up with a little water, and strained. Serve with pieces of toasted bread, fried in butter.

So many pretty things may be made at home by skilful fingers. The painted tambourines still enjoy favor, and a good substitute for one is made by a wooden box cover eight inches in diameter; paint it in some pretty color or have it gilded and on this paint a design, either a flower or figure. For those who are yet amateurs with the brush, a handsome transfer picture may be used instead. Old Spanish castles, figures dancing, and many suitable designs for these come in the transfer pictures. Before it is painted cut five slits lengthwise of the rim, in the middle and at equal distances apart. In four of these put the cymbals—two in a place—which can be made of tin, and held in position by bits of stout wire or pins of extra length.

In the remaining slit fasten a handsome bow of satin ribbon, that will conceal the wire by which the tambourine is to be suspended, or it may be hung up with a ribbon, without the wire. Pretty frames for photographs can be made out of pasteboard or thin wood, covered with velvet and painted in the form of a latticed window with vines winding in and out, the picture filling the part intended for the window panes. Or cover with dark marble paper pasted on; decorate with tiny ferns and fine wood moss glued on, concealing the edges of the frame and the oval. A pretty footstool may be fashioned by taking a low square basket made of splints or willow—even the grotesque Indian baskets will do—filling it full and hard with excelsior, so it will not tip over easily. Now make a cushion for the top; fill it with hair or cotton, cover it with pretty rep or felt, the upper part outlined with long stitches in filling silk or zephyr or in embroidery; now tie it down at each corner of the basket with bows of ribbons or tassels.

Cover the basket all over, before filling, with long stitches of zephyr in daisy patterns or marguerites, or with bands of the same material as the cover, embroidered or outlined to match. Or make a series of three cushions alike and pile one upon another, without the basket. A low footrest may be made for an invalid or old person in this way. The frame is made of wood, covered with cloth or rep; the top is made to rise to any given height, and is stuffed like a stool; at the top of this a large pocket is made, well wadded and lined throughout with flannel, fur or silk; this is embroidered in any design, or can be worked on canvas. The top is ornamented with a pinked ruching of cloth, in addition to this, around the lower part a fringe is added.

An elegant little invention is being sold in Paris, which may be considered the chic novelty for Christmas. It takes the form of an article of jewelry, but it is in reality a little well of scent, from which one drop is exposed to the air, and as soon as this is evaporated another drop takes its place. The effect is that the wearer is constantly surrounded by an invisible vapor of perfume, which is very charming, provided that the scent is mild in character.

A doctor says: "The apple is such a common fruit that very few persons are familiar with its remarkably efficacious medicinal properties. Everybody ought to know that the very best thing they can do is to eat apples just before retiring for the night. Persons uninitiated in the mysteries of the fruit are liable to throw up their hands in horror at the visions of dyspepsia which such a suggestion may summon up, but no harm can come to even a delicate system by the eating of ripe juicy apples before going to bed. The apple is excellent brain food, because it has more phosphoric acid in easily digested shape than other fruits. It excites the action of the liver, promotes sound and healthy sleep and thoroughly disinfects the mouth. It is good for many other purposes—obviates indigestion, and is one of the best preventives known of diseases of the throat."

Chocolate Cream.—Mix the yolks of six eggs strained with two ounces of pounded loaf sugar, three ounces of grated chocolate, and one pint of milk. Set the mixture on the fire in a double saucepan, the outer one filled with hot water, and keep stirring until the milk thickens; dissolve in a little milk one ounce of isinglass, previously soaked in cold water; add this to the cream, strain it, pour it into a mould, and put it into a cold place, or on ice, to set.

Stewed Kidneys.—Skin and parboil some sheep kidneys, cut them in slices, and fry them in butter for a few minutes, with pepper and salt to taste. Mix a tablespoonful of flour with a piece of butter in a saucepan, stir till it begins to color, then add a teaspoonful of good stock and the same quantity of sherry. Let this boil five minutes, then add it to the kidneys, with a small quantity of parsley finely minced. Make the whole hot, and serve.

Forcemeat.—Pound to a paste in a mortar slightly rubbed with garlic, equal parts of veal and fat ham or bacon, then pass them through a wire sieve, and return them to the mortar. Work into the paste thus obtained, a fourth of its bulk of butter, and about the same quantity of bread crumbs, soaked in milk or in stock, with the yolks of one or more eggs, according to quantity. Add minced parsley, pepper, salt, spices, and powdered sweet herbs, to taste.

White stock.—Put a knuckle of veal or two calves' feet, together with a fowl or rabbit and a piece of ham (about half a pound), all cut up into small pieces, into a saucepan with sufficient water to cover the contents. The stock should be carefully skimmed as it gradually becomes heated; then put in two carrots, a head of celery, two onions, and a bunch of parsley, together with two bay leaves and a sprig of thyme, a little mace, a few cloves, with pepper and salt to taste, and leave the whole to boil slowly from three to four hours, when it should be strained and freed from fat.

We all of us complain of the shortness of time, and yet have much more than we know what to do with. Our lives are spent either in doing nothing at all, or in doing nothing to the purpose, or in doing something that we ought not to do. We are always complaining that our days are few, and acting as though there would be no end to them.

His Christmas Eve.

BY A. L.

OF all the thousand and one descendants of Irish kings self-exiled amongst the black-hearted Saxons not one felt himself more aggrieved on this Christmas Eve than Paul Westropp, barrister at law.

It was not that his royal title was still unrecognized, nor that, owing to a general conspiracy amongst attorneys to ignore Irish capabilities, briefs were few, nor even that matter-of-fact tradesmen, heedless of descent, claimed the settlement of accounts by him as by ordinary mortals. Such things troubled the light-hearted Celt in a very slight degree. His vexation was that he had missed the morning express; and this fact, annoying at any time, was doubly so on Christmas Eve. For it happened that the hour which should have seen him en route to make one of a jolly party in the North found him alone and, not unreasonably, disgusted in his town chambers.

It happened that Paul's sister was always in a hurry. So, as a rule, was Paul—in fact, hurry was a characteristic of the Westropps generally.

Thus the family movements were breezy in the extreme. They caught trains as the guard gave the signal for departure—they skimmed the surface of danger, as it were.

So far good; but, when the trouble was a letter that was incoherent as to composition, illegible as to writing, and presenting a blotty appearance maddening to any reader of correspondence, Paul himself thought a line should be drawn.

It seemed the "dear girls" wanted some Christmas finery from Whiteley's, their mother something else in another direction; and he was "such a dear old Paul," who never minded trouble, etc.

Whiteley's on Christmas Eve! The "Universal Provider's" resources are many, but "all the king's horses and all the king's men" could not have controlled inside crush and outside fog; and thus it happened that, as Paul drove up to Euston, the Northern express glided smoothly out.

There was no help for it. His destination was a small out-of-the-way station off the main line, to which trains did not run on Christmas Day.

The day would at least be less dreary in his own rooms than in an hotel half-way North; so, despatching a telegram that changed the day of his arrival from Wednesday to Friday, Paul drove back disconsolately to his Piccadilly chambers.

Mr. Westropp's landlady was of a social turn, and she had contemplated a family gathering in his rooms during his absence, so, notwithstanding valiant efforts, her face fell woefully when she heard of the change in his plans.

Paul thought of the smart dog cart in waiting at the distant Northern station, of the Ferry at Windermere, of Neck-or-Nothing as she got her head and flew along the road, past the Priest's Pond by Hawkshead and Coniston, while the flints flashed under her feet.

At that moment his reflections were interrupted by a tap at the door.

"Come in!" he called out sharply.

"A young person to see you, sir," answered Mrs. Smith, her lips tightly compressed in protest against young persons in general.

"Ask her name and business."

"She wishes to tell you herself, sir," said Mrs. Smith, returning, with an indignant snort of ungratified curiosity.

"Ask her in," requested Paul resignedly.

A neat but poorly-dressed young woman was shown in, whose nervous manner gave Paul the idea that she had come on a begging expedition.

"You wish to speak to me?"

"Yes, sir. It's about Tim."

"Tim?"

"Yes, sir. He's got into trouble, and 'twas himself thought you would help a fellow-countryman, and from Limerick County, too."

"I am afraid I haven't the pleasure of Tim's acquaintance," returned Paul gravely. "But what is it about? Has he been fighting?"

"No, sir. It's not fighting. Tim's a respectable hard-working man!" exclaimed the woman indignantly. "He got mixed up in a crowd in the Park as he was coming home from looking for work a fortnight ago; and the police come down on them, and Tim got a broken ankle and a cut over the head from a bobby; and, what with illness and no work, the heart's just out of him."

"Why don't you apply to a magistrate?" asked Paul. "But, if half a crown will help him——"

"It's the kind word he wants, and work, not money," said the woman; "an' I'd work the flesh from my fingers before he should starve; but Jimmy the crossing-sweeper told him you'd been good to him, and—and——"

Here the woman broke into sobs.

"What is it you want me to do?" asked Paul more gently.

"Nothing," returned the woman proudly as she moved towards the door. "I don't know what made him fool enough to send or me to come. As if it matters to the likes of you whether he lives or dies, even the few yards off he is! It's cold enough now, and will be colder soon; and it's only natural to like a warm fire here better than a sick man's bed in our poor place."

She spoke in a dull miserable tone, and shivered slightly as she drew her threadbare cloak about her and looked round.

The action touched Paul more than her words.

"Look here. What has Tim to do with old Jimmy the crossing sweeper?"

"Tim's father worked for the O'Briens and Studderts for going on thirty year—ay, and Tim after him; and, when the old man died this summer, Tim just scraped up enough money to come over here for work, and 'twas as bad here; and then he got hurt, and Jim told him how good you'd been, and how you'd come from Limerick too; and he has a kind of longing to see some one from near home. But it doesn't matter;" and again the woman made a move.

"Where is he?" asked Paul.

She named a court in one of the small alleys near. Paul mused. The tale was credible, of course. The old Irish sweeper at the crossing he knew well, and had missed him from his usual place during the last day or two. After all, it was only two o'clock, broad daylight, and about ten minutes' walk by a short cut would take him to the place.

"I will go and see my fellow countryman," he said pleasantly.

"It's such a poor place," said the woman doubtfully and hesitatingly.

But Paul was buttoning up his coat, after quietly taking the precaution of divesting himself of his watch and chain.

The streets were even more thronged than in the morning. The "odds and ends" so indispensable at Christmas seemed to have been left to the last, and each pedestrian, each driver was apparently convinced that his or her errand was of paramount importance.

Paul's conductress fell a little behind. Once, as he turned to ask here some question, he saw her eyes fixed upon him so intensely that he almost started. She made a movement forward, as if to come up with him and speak; but at that moment a rough-looking fellow jostled against her and she fell back again. A moment later she turned into a court.

In the stone passage an unmistakable Irish voice accosted them.

"The saints bless your honor av it's to see Tim you're come!"—and a shock-headed Irishman preceded Paul into a room that was more like a cellar at the extreme end of a long passage.

The light came faintly through a small barred window set high in the wall, yet there was enough to enable Paul to see the only other occupant of the place, who was not lying or even sitting down. He was no sickly invalid either, but a tall muscular fellow, who advanced and confronted Paul with an impudent grin, while the other man shut and locked the door.

There was a moment's silence.

"Sure your honor would be willing to pay to see poor Tim sound and well?" said the first speaker in a wheedling tone.

The first shock over, though mentally anathematising his own folly, Paul accepted the situation coolly enough.

"I'm afraid you've got hold of the wrong fish, my fine fellows," he remarked with affected carelessness, for he could not conceal from himself that he was likely to have a very "bad quarter of an hour."

"No; thin 'twas a fellow-countryman we wanted," returned the man, in a bantering tone. "But we're not the boys to inconvanience a gintleman, and Tim here will have all the pleasure in the world in placing the new healed limbs at your honor's service by fetching the check book if the purse isn't alsy to come at!"

"And if I refuse—what then?" asked Paul.

"Why, thin your honor won't pass a pleasant Christmas day, I'm thinking. We haven't had time to get carpets and sofies since the invitation wint out. And we're mighty lonely about here, so the neighbors don't think of coming in to ask after one," returned the ruffian significantly.

Paul looked around him while the two men eyed him narrowly, and it took him but a few moments to see that he was hopelessly trapped.

"What do you expect to get out of me, ass that I am?" he asked.

"Well, seeing your honor came so readily, we'll let you off cheap—say £250.

"I'm hanged if you'll get it!" ejaculated Paul.

"Now look here," interposed the second man—"we're not the men to stick at trifles, and money we must have. You have only to decide on which you place the highest value—your life or your £250.

The man was unmistakably in earnest, and Paul ruefully made up his mind.

"What security have I that I shall get safely out of this hole after parting with the money?" he asked.

"Man alive, we don't want murder if it can be managed without. We've enough on hand just now. Here are paper and pencil—both club pattern—so you can send a line to your landlady with your keys for your check book. You'll remain here for an hour or two after we've got the cash, and then you'll be free and a wiser man than you were when you tumbled out of bed this morning."

Paul looked curiously at the last speaker.

The voice and accent were those of an educated man, and, notwithstanding the disgust and worry of his own affairs, he could not help wondering as to the course of events which had brought the man to this pass.

Paul wrote the note, then it was read over carefully by the men, the rougher of the two commenting:

"It's little enough too we'll get for the trouble we've had, giving Sally her lesson and make up. And the fool would have let on, too, if I hadn't jogged her elbow on the way."

The ruffians then left the cellar, carefully bolting the heavy door after them, and leaving their prisoner to his reflections.

There was not a vestige of furniture save a rickety table and a couple of shaky chairs; a sack of straw lay in a corner, and a small fire burned in a rusty grate. Paul mechanically bent down to remove a poker, apparently left to "draw" the fire up and then forgotten. It was red-hot, and he hastily withdrew his fingers; but with the touch of the burning metal a sudden inspiration flashed into his mind.

"It's a risk—a deuced risk," he murmured thoughtfully; "still there's a chance, so here goes!" And, replacing the poker in the fire, he waited.

The minutes passed slowly—it was growing dark; and Paul's heart beat quickly as footsteps sounded along the stone passage. Grasping the red-hot poker, he moved quietly and rapidly towards the door.

There was a fumbling at the lock, the key turned, and the two men, followed by a boy carrying a light, entered the cellar. Without a moment's hesitation Paul threw himself upon them, and, as the startled ruffians, totally unprepared for the attack, fell back, the boy dropped the candle, and all was confusion.

As well as the darkness would permit the men made a dash to secure their prisoner; but, brandishing the red-hot poker, Paul darted between them through the doorway and into the passage. With an oath they started in pursuit, calling loudly on some invisible person to close the outer door; but, lulled into security by reports of the resignation of their "catch," there was no one at hand, and Paul got clear into the street.

Half an hour later Westropp, with four stout policemen, stood in that cellar again. The late inmates were not at home; the door was thrown hospitably open, the ashes still smouldered in the grate, and Paul, with a feeling of honesty which did him credit, replaced the poker!

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"And Ardelia liked him, that was plain to see; at first as I watched and see him totter, I thought she was a sort o' wobblin' too, and when he fell deep, deep in love, I looked to see her a follerin' on. But Ardelia, as soft as she was, had an element of strength. She was ambitious. She liked Abram, but she had read novels a good deal, and she had for years been LOOKIN' FOR A PRINCE TO COME A RIDIN' UP TO THEIR DOORYARD IN DISGUISE WITH A CROWN OF UNDER HIS HAT, AND WOO HER TO BE HIS BRIDE.

"And so she braced herself against the sweet influence of love and it was tuff—I could see for myself that it was, when she had laid out to set on a throne by the side of a prince, he a holdin' his father's scepter in his hand—to descend from that elevation and wed a husband who was a moulder of bread, with a rollin' pin in his hand. It was tuff for Ardelia; I could see right through her mind (it wasn't a great distance to see) and I could see just how the conflict was."

She takes off FOLLIES, FLIRTATIONS, LOW-NECKED DRESSING, DUDES, PUG DOGS, TOBOGGANING, etc.

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GRAY AND SILVER.

I had a love; dark-haired was she,
Her eyes were gray.
For sake of her across the sea
I sailed away.

Death, sickness, tempest and defeat
All passed me by;
With years came Fortune, fair and fleet,
And rich was I.

Again for me the sun looked down
Familiar skies;
I found my love, her locks had grown
Gray as her eyes.

"Alas!" she sighed, "Forget me, now
No longer fair."
"I loved thy heart," I whispered low,
"And not thy hair."

—C. E. D. Phelps.

The house duty—Keep it clean.

Counterfeit presentiment—The tender of base coin.

Natural history query—What relation are cowslips to bulrushes?

What is that which the rich man wants, the poor man has, the miser spends, and the spendthrift saves?—Nothing.

A.: Don't you admire the man who can say the right thing at the right time?

B.: Yes—particularly when I'm thirsty.

The donor: Now, don't go and spend that in the nearest saloon.

The Recipient: No, sir, dere's a better one around de corner.

Effie: There are as fine fish in the sea as ever were caught.

Blanche: Yes; but they don't do anything but watch the little ones nibble.

History class at school—Teacher: Name some of the most important things existing to-day which were unknown 100 years ago.

Tommy, with an air of intelligence: Us!

"'The noblest study of mankind is man,'" quoted the lecturer, and paused.

"But his favorite one has ever been woman!" cried out a flippant youth in the audience.

She: Charlie, the engagement ring you gave me has "E. C." engraved on it. I hope you were never engaged before!

He: Never, darling. "E. C." stands for uncer—well, that means—eighteen carat.

"It is said we shall all pass away as a tale that is told."

"That sounds all right; but tales that are told don't pass away—they are forever being told over again."

The little one, being the guest of her grandma, had been liberally feasted, when a second dish of pudding came on. Looking at the steaming dish, she exclaimed, with a sigh:

"Gran'ma, I wish I was twins."

First doctor: I had a very interesting case the other day. The diagnosis was all right, but the course of the disease was decidedly abnormal.

Second doctor: What course did it take?

First doctor: The patient recovered.

Visitor: What are you crying about, my little man?

Little Willie: All my brothers has got a vacation, and I hain't got none.

Visitor: Why, that's too bad! How is that?

Willie, between sobs: I—don't go—to school yet!

What part of the eye is like a rainbow?—The iris. What part is like a schoolboy?—The pupil. What part is like the globe?—The ball. What part is like the top of a chest?—The lid. What part is like a piece of a whip?—The lash. What part is like the summit of a hill?—The brow.

Clerk, to seedy stranger, who had just registered: Have a room?

S. S.: No.

Clerk: Dinner, I suppose?

S. S.: Not at all. I only wanted to arrive. It's a good many years since I have arrived at a hotel, and if you've no objection I will simply arrive. Good morning!"

A fiery man challenged a barrister, who gratified him by an acceptance. The duellist, who was lame, requested that he might have a prop.

"Suppose," said he, "I lean against this milestone?"

"Agreed," said the lawyer, "provided I may lean against the next."

The duel never came off.

A Killarney woman was congratulated by some visitors on the appearance of her children.

"Speaks well for the climate," said one of the visitors.

"Faith, your honor," was the prompt reply, "it's the climate that half of them lives on, for, to tell the truth, they're very badly off!"

"Ben," said an old colored deacon to his son, "you's a-gwine out now inter de great en wicked worl'."

"Yes, suh!"

"En you wants ter heed my device?"

"Yes, suh!"

"Well, dis is erbout all I got ter say ter you. Don't go in de poultry-business when de moon is shinin'; en always be sho' en keep in de front part er de mule!"

CONCERNING GIFTS.

What Makes Christmas Gifts---What to Give---and to Whom.

Of all Christmas presents none can be more valuable than those fashioned by the loving hands of the giver. Gentlemen especially, place a three fold value upon any gift that bears the workmanship of the fair donor.

And we would advise ladies and children to give gifts of their own handiwork as far as possible; and among the first gifts we mention shall be some that boys and girls and ladies can make equally well.

A bundle of brown splints of green, scarlet, blue and salmon single zephyr worsted, will make four sets of table-mats (six mats and three sizes in a set). Interweave the splints, notch the end of each stick, and put cross-stitches of worsted at the corners, or all around the edge of the mats to hold splints in place.

A great variety of wall-pockets for papers, wall p ckets for ferns and grasses, baskets, and pictures, may be made of splints and worsted. A bundle of white splints will make at least a dozen baskets, and worsted costs but a trifle.

Handsome cornucopias may be made, at a trifling expense, for an entire family. Buy the paper—solid colors glazed, or gilt, or plain mixed with gilt—at a stationer's, and get a few scrap pictures and some of the relief bordering that may be bought in long strips very cheap

From white wrapping paper cut your cornucopia, including the entire length of the white paper that folds over at the top; next paste on the fancy paper, hiding its top edge with bordering, under which the ribbon must go; add your picture and join the horn neatly at the back. Fill it with sweetstuff.

Half a dozen nice towels embroidered on one end with initial or initials in scarlet cotton, is a desirable gift to boarding-school girls. A crocheted woolen scarf is very acceptable to many elderly gentleman, and to children who play out-of-doors much.

With white split zephyr crochet a stripe of shell work (four stitches in each shell) two fingers wide and six long; line it with cherry-colored lining silk, adding a tiny strip of cotton, filled with sachet powder, at each end, which cover by felling over it an additional strip of silk; crochet a tiny border of scallops, edged with a chain of cherry silk or zephyr, across the two short ends, then fold the whole strip, silk inside so that the ends meet in the middle, and crochet the scalloped border around the four sides, and you have a pretty handkerchief case for lady or gentlemen.

But there are a thousand pretty and useful trifles that expert fingers can fashion, and we have not the space to mention, as we must suggest the gifts that may be given to the different members of the family.

For the ladies there are sashes, and dainty sacques and hoods and wraps, and rings, chains, lockets, silver spoons, knives, forks, cups, rubber toys, linen books, satchel bags, chairs, carriages, afghans, toilet soap, lace collars, collar pins, socks, shoes, dresses—anything pretty, amusing, or useful, since babies and little children may accept ever so costly a gift.

For the children there are toys and books, and sweets, thimbles, pencils, knives, work boxes, writing desks, and articles of wear.

A young lady who is fond of finery will always appreciate pretty collars, ruffles, ties, ribbons, handkerchiefs, a pair of hose, more expensive than she can buy, gloves, perfumeries, fans, trinkets, etc.

Do not give books to any but those who really appreciate them; but to grown people, young people or children who are really fond of books, there can be no gift given more calculated to inspire pleasure. A standard of flowers, a fernery, hanging basket, globe of fish, or canary bird is often a great delight to an invalid.

Work-boxes, desks, portfolios, any implements for writing or sewing, are appreciated by boarding-school girls, or girls fond of study or needlework.

Some young ladies and gentlemen are very fond of pictures, brackets, and various ornaments for beautifying their rooms, and sometimes an article of household furniture is very desirable to give to mother.

Father may be longing for some new book or picture, or a new pencil or pen; or he may need handkerchiefs, slippers, ties, gloves, or scarf or perhaps he would like a new hair-brush, or shaving-cup, or handsome cup and saucer, or napkin ring.

When you go in your friend's drawing-room see if she has a card receiver, or a place for a little statuette, or if she needs tidies for any of her chairs, or mats for her piano or table, or a burnt match receiver to hang from the chandelier, or if a dainty air castle would be an improvement to the room.

If you suspect that any of your cousins are rather short of pocket money, that times are "hard" at uncle's, you can give aunt a nice set of collars and cuffs, and the girls some fine handkerchiefs, or a silk one.

Listen to each one's wishes, and consult each one's taste, and you can surely think of something to make or purchase for your friends—something that when the Christmas dinner is over, and the dessert removed, and the labelled packages put on the big empty table, will cause pleased voices to cry out, as they discover their treasures: "That is just what I wanted!" "How came you to think of it?" "How beautifully you have made it!"

The growth of higher feeling within us is like the growth of faculty, bringing with it a sense of added strength; we can no more wish to return to a narrower sympathy, than a painter or musician can wish to return to his cruder manner, or a philosopher to his less complete formula.

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No. 2. From forehead back as far as bald.	No. 2. From forehead over the head to neck, No. 2.
No. 3. Over forehead as far as required.	No. 3. From ear to ear over the top.
No. 4. Over the crown of the head.	No. 4. From ear to ear round the forehead.

They have always ready for sale a splendid Stock of Gents' Wigs, Toupees, Ladies' Wigs, Half Wigs, Fringes, Braids, Curls, etc., beautifully manufactured, and as cheap as any establishment in the Union. Letters from any part of the world will receive attention.

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This preparation has been manufactured and sold at Dollard's for the past fifty years, and its merits are such that, while it has never yet been advertised, the demand for it keeps steadily increasing.

Also DOLLARD'S RESTORATIVE CREAM to be used in conjunction with the Herbanium when the Hair is naturally dry and needs an oil.

Mrs. Edmondson Gorter writes to Messrs. Dollard & Co., to send her a bottle of their Herbanium Extract for the Hair. Mrs. Gorter has tried in vain to obtain anything equal to it as a dressing for the hair in England.

MRS. EDMONDSON GORTER.
Oak Lodge Thorpe,
Nov., 20, '85. Norwich, Norfolk, England.

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For Buffalo, (Parlor Car)		12.30 p m	
Buffalo and Chicago Exp. Sleeping Cars,	daily,	8.00 p m 9.45 p m	

Williamsport Express, week-days, 8.35, 10.10 a m, 4.05 p m. Daily (Sleeper) 11.30 p m.

Lock Haven, Clearfield and Bellefonte Express (Sleeper) daily, except Saturday, 11.30 p m.

FOR NEW YORK.

Leave Reading Terminal, 7.30, (two-hour train), 8.30, 9.30, 10.30, 11.00 a m, 12.45, (dining car), 1.30, 3.05, 4.00, 4.05, 5.00, 6.10, 8.10 (dining car) p m, 12.05 night. Sundays—8.30, 9.30, 11.30 (dining car) a m, 1.30, 3.05, 6.10, 8.10 (dining car) p m, 12.05 night.

Leave 24th and Chestnut Sts., 4.00, 11.04, a m, 12.37 (Dining car), 3.06, 4.10, 5.12, 8.19 (dining car), 11.58 p m. Sunday 4.00 a m 12.14, (dining car), 4.10, 5.12, 8.19, (dining car), 11.58 p m.

Leave New York, foot of Liberty street, 4.30, 8.00, 8.00, 10.00, 11.30 a m, 1.30, 2.00, 3.30, 4.00 (two-hour train), 4.30 (two-hour train), 5.00, 5.00, 7.30, 9.00 p m, 12.15 night. Sundays—4.30 9.00, 10.00, 11.30 a m, 2.00, 4.00 5.00 p m, 12.15 night.

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FOR SCHUYLKILL VALLEY POINTS.

For Phœnixville and Pottstown—Express, 8.35, 10.10 a m, 12.45, 4.05, 5.30, 11.30 p m. Accom. 4.20, 7.45, 11.05 a m, 1.42, 4.35, 5.51, 7.20 p m. Sundays—Express, 4.00, 9.05 a m, 11.30 p m. Accom., 7.00, 11.35 a m, 6.15, p m.

For Reading—Express, 8.35, 10.10 a m, 12.45, 4.05, 5.30, 11.30 p m. Accom., 4.20, 7.45 a m, 1.42, 4.35, 5.53, 7.20 p m. Sunday—Express 4.00, 9.05 a m, 11.30 p m. Accom., 7.00 a m, 6.15 p m.

For Lebanon and Harrisburg—Express, 8.35, 10.10 a m, 4.05, 5.30 p m. Accom., 4.20 a m, 1.42, 7.20 p m. Sunday—Express, 4.00 a m. Accom., 7.00 a m, 6.15 p m.

For Gettysburg, 8.35, 10.10 a m.

For Pottsville—Express, 8.35, 10.10 a m, 4.05, 5.30, 11.30 p m. Accom., 4.20, 7.45 a m, 1.42 p m. Sunday—Express, 4.00, 9.05 a m, 11.30 p m. Accom., 7.00 a m, 6.15 p m.

For Shamokin and Williamsport—Express, 8.35, 10.10 a m, 4.05, 11.30 p m. Sunday—Express, 9.05 a m, 11.30 p m. Additional for Shamokin—Express, week-days, 5.30 p m. Accom., 4.20 a m. Sundays—Express, 4.00 a m.

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